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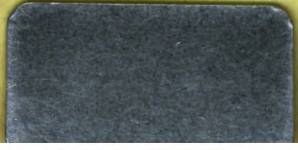

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CEDAR BROOK STORIES;

OR,

THE CLIFFORD CHILDREN.

By A. S. M.,
AUTHOR OF "ONLY A PAUPER," ETC.

VOL. IV.

SOWING IN NEW FIELDS.

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SOWING IN NEW FIELDS.

CHAPTER I.

CHANGES.

Two years have fled upon the swift wings of time since little Bennie was called home to God; and with those years some changes have taken place in the home of our little friends at Cedar Brook. Frank has entered the high school, and stands side by side with Elliot in his studies. Time has only cemented the friendship between the two boys, and they are so seldom seen apart that they are called "the inseparables" by their

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school-fellows. Elliot is now a stout, healthy boy, — a head taller than Frank, and looking four or five years older. Frank is strong and healthy, too, but rather small for his age. Through his influence Mr. Wentworth has signed a temperance pledge, which he has kept unbroken; and is also through Frank's influence a regular attendant at church upon the Sabbath. His close attention to his business has enabled him to remove his family to a small, but convenient house, just below Mr. Scarrett's. Relieved from her former wearing anxiety respecting her husband, Mrs. Wentworth has recovered her cheerfulness and elasticity of spirit; and little Gracie, or 'Tot,' as

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Elliot still calls her, is like a joyous bird caroling forth her sweet notes, — the life and sunshine of her happy home. Annie is a tall, dignified girl of fourteen years; still pale, but not sickly; shy, sensitive, yet self-possessed; the companion of her mother, and the gentle, patient assistant of her sisters Edith and Lulu. Edith is, like Frank, small for her age, but much stouter, — her cheeks as rosy, her face as roguish and full of fun, as ever. She is steadier, though, than she was two years ago, and has learned to prefer a quiet walk with Winnie, or read an interesting book, to climbing trees and fording brooks. But Edith is not mopish:

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she can run if need be, and pretty fast, too; has not lost her relish for a frolic, or forgotten to use her tongue: but is as ready to talk as ever, provided she can find a listener. Lulu is seven years old; loving, good-tempered, and happy, as ever. She is not quite so robust as Edith, having just recovered from the whooping cough. Fortunately the other children have had it, or else Mrs. Clifford, whose health has failed very much during the past year, would be likely to suffer from the care of them. Winnie is still governess for the girls, whose rapid progress under her care is a source of much happiness to Mr. and Mrs. Clifford. Bennie is not forgotten:

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his memory is kept fresh and green in the hearts of all, especially in Edith's, who often asks herself the the question, "Shall I ever be good enough to go to that beautiful home where he is now so happy? and when I die will God permit him to show me the way through those pearly gates into the heavenly city?"

Our good friend Mr. Scarrett must not be forgotten. Since the night of Bennie's death, he has been a frequent visitor at Cedar Brook, and Frank has had no occasion to find fault for any unnecessary lectures from him. His manner is still abrupt, his voice gruff, his words few; but the children have all discovered the kind heart that beats beneath his

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rough exterior, and Cedar Brook has not a more welcome guest than Mr. Scarrett,—or Uncle Rob, as Edith is bold enough to call him. The old man does not resent the familiar appellation; but his lips wreathe in smiles, his eye softens, as he follows the quick motions of the little mischief, who, nothing daunted by Annie's admonitory looks, seats herself upon his knee, puts on his spectacles, steals his snuff-box, and fills his pockets with lozenges and gum-drops.

"You are the dearest old man I ever saw," she said, one day, as he patiently allowed her to smooth his stiff hair, adjust his cravat, and make him look "stylish." "I don't think you are the least bit like a bear,

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now, — you are only my dear, good Uncle Rob."

"A bear!" repeated the old gentleman, his brow slightly contracting — "who says I'm a bear?"

"Oh, I did not mean to say that," said Edith, blushing and looking confused. "The words slipped off my tongue before I thought. Pray excuse me."

"Do *you* think I am like a bear?" asked Mr. Scarrett, rather enjoying her embarrassment, as he placed his hand under her chin and turned her face up to his.

"I just said that I didn't, sir."

"Who does, then?"

"Oh, no one, now. Frank used to

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think you was cross; but he doesn't now."

"Frank did — eh? Come here, young man, and give me your reasons for thinking me a bear," said the old man, as Frank just then passed by the door.

"I do not think so now, sir," replied Frank, glancing reproachfully at Edith.

"A mere echo of Edith's words! Pray give me a definite answer to my question. I'll promise not to eat you, if you speak the truth;" and the old man displayed a set of teeth in excellent preservation for a man of seventy years. Frank laughed, but answered, promptly:

"I did call you a bear, once, Mr.

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Scarrett, when I was angry because you condemned me, without judge or jury, as you know you often used to do. It was the night you scolded me for keeping company with Mr. Wentworth, — you remember it, sir? But I did not think you *all* bear, even then: I gave you credit for being a *little* of a saint. I did not know you as well then as I do now. I think you have a great deal of goodness, sir, and always mean well; but — "

"But you can detect the bear, still, can't you?" said the old man, with a hearty laugh, as he finished the sentence for Frank. "I believe you are right, my boy; and I fear my teeth and claws will show themselves in spite of me. Yes, I have been a

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hard, stern man all my life, children; but," he added, sadly, "there may be some little excuse for me. *You* would, perhaps, excuse me, if you could look back on the solitary life I led for so many years, and see how the unhappy remembrance of my boyhood, and my boyhood's home, has tinged all my life with sombre hues, and caused me through its darkened medium to view the actions of my fellow-creatures, and, alas! sit too often in judgment upon them — forgetting that divine injunction, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' Need I be astonished that often in my own experience I have felt the truth of our Saviour's words, 'For with what judgment ye judge, ye

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shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again?' I know I have been uncharitable, morose, forbidding," and Mr. Scarrett sighed, as he drew Edith's head to his shoulder and kissed her. "But," he added, more cheerfully, after a pause, "since I have adopted this little girl, I have found a soft place in my heart — and my head, too, I believe, or else I have caught a sudden cold," and the old gentleman fumbled in his pocket for his handkerchief.

"O, Uncle Rob! you must not talk so hard about yourself! You know you never had any little children, and didn't understand how to talk to them. Father says there is

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nothing so softening to a man's character as the society of children: they rub off all the rough edges, and make him patient, gentle, and unselfish."

"True enough, Edith; and wont you give me credit for being a little less unsocial and gruff than I used to be?"

"Yes, indeed, I will! But, Uncle Rob, I guess I've helped you considerable, — more than the rest, at any rate."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, I have been the most like a nutmeg-grater, in rubbing down all your rough edges, as papa calls them — only sometimes I let the grater slip and rub the skin off my own

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fingers instead," said Edith, merrily. "You know yesterday you gave me a lecture upon studying to be quiet and minding my own business; when I asked you if it wasn't funny to see Mr. Luke sleep all sermon-time, but start up when it was finished, run his fingers through his hair, and try to look as if he had been wide awake all the time! then turn round and nod at father, — as much as to say, 'A splendid sermon, *that*, sir!' Oh, it was too comical! I watched his head all sermon-time, bobbing first one side, and then the other. I was afraid he would break his neck, It must have ached!"

"'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more

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ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise,'" said Mr. Scarrett, looking seriously, but kindly, at Edith.

"Oh dear! there goes another piece of skin!" said Edith, with a rueful face, as she carefully wrapped her handkerchief round her fingers. "I'd rather help Bridget make cake or clean paint than talk with you. My knuckles would be safer, at any rate."

"I have no doubt of it, my child. I do not intend to lecture you, or in any way repress your flow of spirits; only, I think if your own heart

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had been interested in the faithful sermon your pastor preached last Sunday, you would have had neither eyes or thoughts for Brother Luke, or felt any concern respecting the safety of his neck. — But hark! if there is not my wife, asking if I am here! Dear me! I forgot all about my errand," exclaimed the old man, with a ludicrous expression, as he put Edith off his knee and went forward to meet his wife. "How do you do, Mrs. Scarrett? I am very glad to see you. Here! *Mrs. Clifford!* — my wife sent me to ask you all to take tea with us this afternoon; but I forgot all about it. She's come to tell us tea is ready, I suppose. I declare, its after five o'clock,

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and we have supper at six! Where has the time gone! Come! — don't stop to rig, any of you, — come right along;" and the old gentleman held both hands to his ears, and pretended to slide by his wife as if he expected punishment for his forgetfulness.

"Why, Robert!" said his wife, in a tone of reproach, though her round, good-natured face beamed with smiles as she watched his retreating figure, followed close by Edith holding on to the skirt of his coat, and laughing merrily.

Not wishing to disappoint the good lady, who had indeed commissioned her husband to invite them all to tea, Winnie and the children

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accepted the invitation, and accompanied her home. Mrs. Clifford was too feeble to venture out after dark. She therefore remained at home. Mr. Clifford had letters of importance to answer, and declined going to tea, but promised to call, for an hour, in the evening.

July and August passed without much change, except in Mrs. Clifford's health, which still continued to fail, until she became so feeble, and quickly exhausted by the slightest exertion, that her husband and sister could not conceal their anxiety lest comsumption, that dreaded disease, of which her mother and sister died, had already fastened itself upon her. Her distressing cough, restless

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nights, and rapidly increasing debility alarmed them; and, with anxious hearts, they questioned the doctor what they could do to avert the result they so much feared.

"I do not think her in a confirmed consumption," he replied. "Her lungs are weak, but not greatly diseased. Her increasing debility is the thing I am most troubled about. Strengthen her system, and her cough will leave her. How would a trip to England suit you? — could you leave your business for six months or a year? I think change of scene and climate would do wonders."

"I have thought of that myself, but hardly dared to propose it, fearing she might object. My wife is

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so fond of home, I can scarcely prevail upon her to leave it for a day."

"Just the very reason why she should go away, sir. Mrs. Clifford confines herself entirely too much, and her constant anxiety for her family is too wearing for her in her present state of health. Take her away as soon as you can, and keep her away till she recovers her strength. I have no fear of the result."

In accordance with the doctor's injunction, Mr. Clifford made every arrangement in his business for an absence of several months. Mrs. Clifford at first objected; but seeing her husband decided, she gave up all opposition, and suffered Winnie to

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arrange everything for her departure. It was at first proposed that Winnie should keep house during her absence, still instructing the girls, while Frank also attended school with Elliot. But Winnie received a very urgent letter from Uncle John and his wife to go West and make them a visit, bringing one of the children with her. Mr. Clifford also received the same day a proposition from one of his friends, who knew of his intention of visiting Europe, to hire his house and furniture for six months or a year, offering him a liberal rent. This was an offer not to be refused; and, after some consideration, Mr. Clifford decided to make the arrangement. Lulu, Mrs. Clif-

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ford decided to take with her, — the idea of being separated from all her children being more than she could bear. Annie was to visit her grandparents, — Mr. Clifford's father and mother, — who resided on a farm in New Hampshire. Frank, at Mr. Scarrett's earnest entreaty, was to board with him, — the old gentleman promising, if he was discontented or homesick, to provide him a home elsewhere. Edith was to accompany Winnie to Illinois, and remain until her parents returned.

We may well imagine there were busy hands and fingers at Cedar Brook for the next few weeks, — and it was well it was so; for, had Mrs. Clifford or the children allowed

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themselves to brood over this sudden breaking up of the whole family, they would have hardly felt equal to the separation. The children, of course, could not feel the change so deeply as did their mother or aunt: there was an excitement and novelty in the idea of visiting new places and scenes, to which they each looked forward, that in a measure took away their grief at the thought of parting with each other, and, above all, with their beloved parents. It was not until the hour really came, when they each bade "good-by" to their father and mother on board the steamer, that they fully realized their loss. Edith was inconsolable, and cried herself almost sick. Annie

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wept silently; but her pale face and loss of appetite told Winnie how deeply the gentle girl felt the separation from her almost idolized mother. Frank said little, but strove, by every attention in his power, to comfort them all. As the first evening closed around the weeping group, he drew his chair beside his father's large arm-chair, now vacant, opened the Bible, and in trembling tones read his mother's favorite Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Closing the Bible, he hesitated a moment, then, kneeling, in a low voice, trembling, diffident, yet with fervent supplication, asked God's blessing and protection for his parents, now far upon

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the wide ocean, and then upon the little group beside him. His words were very few, very simple. It was his first prayer before others — his first decided declaration of his love to God, his first taking up the cross in the Christian life.

Not a word was spoken by any one for some moments after they rose from prayer. Frank's course was so unexpected, so pleasing to them all, that tears and silence seemed the most fitting expression of their feelings.

Edith was the first to break the silence, that was becoming almost painful. Softly crossing the room, she knelt down beside Frank, threw her arms around his neck, and, be-

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tween her sobs and tears, exclaimed, "O Franky! Franky! do you believe God will let mother get well and come back to us? and can you tell me how to be good all the time she is away?" You are good, and so is Annie, — he will take care of you; but I — I am so wicked, I'm afraid I shall never see her again. I wish I was deaf, and dumb, and blind, then I couldn't be forever doing wrong, as I am now"

"But you would have a wicked heart still, Edie," said Frank, putting his arm fondly around her, and leaning her bowed head upon his shoulder. "You would sin just as much, if that heart was not changed, as you do now. Besides, it is wrong to wish

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yourself deaf, dumb, and blind. Suppose God should take you at your word, — only think how wretched and helpless you would be!"

"I know it, Franky, — I didn't exactly mean what I said: I only meant I wish I could keep my tongue still, and not be doing and saying everything I ought not. If I could only be steady like Annie, or right up to the mark as you are, I should have some hope: but I am a foolish little weathercock, turning whichever way the wind blows; forever running right into the face and eyes of mischief and trouble. This very morning, when mother was faint on board the steamer, and I would have cut off my own head if

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I could have made her feel better, what should I do but empty the whole contents of the cologne-bottle right into her face and eyes in my hurry to do something, almost blinding and strangling her, besides bringing on one of her dreadful spells of coughing! I was mad enough with myself to jump overboard. As soon as dear mother could speak, she told me not to cry — she knew it was an accident; but that made me feel so much the worse to have her excuse me so kindly: for I knew it was only my confounded carelessness, and told her so. That blundering was not enough for one day; but, when I came off the steamer, I cried so I could not see my

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way, but must pitch into a basket of oranges an old woman had set down on the wharf, and sent them all into the gutter. Gracious! how she talked! I helped her pick up some of them; but Peter drove up with the carriage, and I had to leave. I do believe I am the stupidest piece of flesh and blood the Lord ever made."

"Hush, Edith! the Lord made you well enough, — it is only your own want of consideration that leads you into so much trouble. You must try to think before you act, Edie, and then you will avoid so many mistakes."

"That is just it! but my forethoughts always come afterwards.

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I can think as straight as anybody, when the mischief is all done."

"Don't be discouraged," said Frank, as Winnie left the room. "The same kind ear that has listened to my prayer for pardon and strength to overcome, in a measure, my besetting sins, is just as ready to hear you, if you ask in faith, nothing doubting. You do ask, don't you?" and Frank looked at her anxiously.

"Sometimes, when I feel very bad, and don't know what else to do."

"There is *not* anything else for you to do — *ever* — if you want to be good. Do not let it be *sometimes*, but always, every day. Wont you begin to-night? — promise me you will.

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Mother told me once, when I felt just as you do, that prayer was the first step in the Christian life: we must begin, carry on, and end our course with prayer; without it we can do nothing."

"I can't promise, for you know I am so forgetful; besides, it's dreadful hard work sometimes."

"Harder than your constant regret, and often unhappiness, caused by your carelessness and want of thought?"

"I don't know, Frank. It is all up-hill work, any way. You are a boy, and can do as you choose. Annie, was born good, with the whole book of Proverbs on the end of her tongue. I dare say the first sentence

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she ever uttered, was, 'Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding.' But I think I am like Ephraim, — a cake not turned — only half baked — all crust one side, and all dough the other."

"What a strange girl you are, Edith! You make me laugh in spite of myself. Do be sober, and think seriously of these things, for once."

"Well, Franky, I will 'by-and-by' — to-morrow, perhaps; but to-night my thoughts will be like the fool's eyes, wandering to the ends of the earth, as Uncle Rob very politely told me they were the other day, when he was explaining to Annie the law of gravitation, and I interrupted him

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by asking him in what year his coat was made. I can think of nothing else to-night but the great distance there is between us and mother, and how many things may happen to prevent her ever coming home again. Good-night, brother, dear;" and Edith once more put her arms round Frank's neck, and, bursting into tears, hurried to her chamber.

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CHAPTER II.

SCATTERED EAST, NORTH, AND WEST.

THREE days after Mr. Clifford and his wife sailed for Liverpool, his father, to whom he had written previous to his leaving home, arrived at Cedar Brook. Grandpa Clifford was a hale, hearty old man of over seventy years, — his form still erect, his steps firm, his mind vigorous. He was warmly welcomed by all; though not having visited his son for several years, he was almost a stranger to Edith; but Annie and Frank remembered him well. It was a busy sea-

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son with him on his farm, Mr. Clifford told Winnie, and he could not be away from home but a few days; and Winnie was obliged to work diligently to have Annie in readiness to return with him.

Again was the little household filled with sadness, as they returned from the depot, whither they had been to take their leave of Annie and her grandfather.

"Our turn comes next," said Edith, as she crept into bed with Winnie, that night. "I wish it was all over, and we were safe in Illinois. I should like to go to sleep and not wake till we get there — shouldn't you, auntie?"

"Hardly, Edith, unless I wished

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to miss much that would be pleasant and delightful on our journey. When I came on I was alone, and travelled day and night without stopping, and thus lost the opportunity of visiting many places I have quite a desire to see. As you will be with me now, I hope to stop a day or two at some of the principal places, and thus gain a more correct idea of them than I now have."

"I wish Frank was going, too; then I should not feel half so bad."

"I wish he could go with us; but it would not be well for him to leave his studies now, he is getting along so finely; besides, I think his being thrown for a time entirely upon himself, will have a beneficial influence

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upon his character. Frank's self-reliance is now of the right kind; and he feels the responsibility resting upon him of so conducting himself during his parents' absence that they shall not regret leaving him, as it were, without control. Mr. Scarrett, no doubt, will look after him in a measure; still, he has no authority to control — only advise. It would be a hazardous experiment, I allow, to leave so young a boy as Frank without control, did not your father feel confident he is a Christian: feeling this, he trusts Frank will have strength given him to do right. He has promised your father to keep a journal, and note down, not only the incidents of every day,

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but also his feelings, his doubts, difficulties, temptations; and this journal he is to forward to your father, as far as completed, by every steamer. This will be a powerful incentive to watchfulness on Frank's part, — be even more useful, for the time, than his father's presence; as he will thus lay open to his inspection thoughts and feelings otherwise confined to his own breast."

"Oh dear! I'm glad I'm not obliged to keep a journal, — a pretty mess, I think, it would be! I'm thankful some of my foolish thoughts are hid from every one. I can keep my heart closed, if I don't my mouth."

"From all but Him who reads every thought and intent of the

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heart; and in whose sight thoughts are words, and motives actions!"

Edith pursued the conversation no further; but her thoughts were busy long after Winnie was asleep.

Parting from Frank was nearly as distressing to Edith as parting from her mother; and it was not till they had nearly reached Providence that her tears ceased, and she became interested in what was passing around her. On board the boat her spirits returned; and it was with difficulty Winnie could restrain her curiosity, as she ran from the cabin to the deck, examining everything, and asking questions respecting all she saw. The night was very beautiful, and most of the passengers had retired

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to their berths. Winnie was not troubled by sea-sickness, neither was Edith; so they sat on deck till a late hour, enjoying to the full that glorious night: Edith watching the foaming wake of the steamer, as it stretched far away in a long line of frosted silver; and Winnie gazing alternately at the cloudless sky and heaving bosom of the water, upon which the calm face of the moon and the twinkling stars were reflected in increased brilliancy. They made no stay in New York, but left the boat for the depot of the Erie Railroad to Niagara. Soon, with much snorting and puffing, their iron steed started, and they were on their way. On, on, past wood and plain, valley, farm-

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houses, orchards, and villages. Edith was delighted with this rapid mode of travelling: it just suited her nervous, restless, temperament; and as houses, fields, and villages seemed to appear and disappear, like scenes on a magic mirror, she could hardly restrain her delight. The road was wild, but full of charms to her, as they followed the course of the Delaware, and looked down upon its swift waters, — crossed the high bridges over the valley, and saw the water as it plunged down the ravine at Cascade Bridge. At Elmira they changed cars, — where a pleasant-looking gentleman took the seat directly in front of theirs. He was soon attracted by Edith's exclama-

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tions and enthusiastic admiration of the scenery, and, with well-bred courtesy, entered into conversation with Winnie and Edith: giving them much information respecting the places they passed. "We are near Niagara now," he said, in reply to Edith's question, "What is that rumbling noise I hear?" "In a few moments we shall be there. Do you put up at the Cataract House?"

"We intended to, sir," answered Winnie.

"Let me have the pleasure of seeing to your baggage, Miss ——. I gather from what this little girl has said, that you are journeying to Illinois. I belong to that state, — have been east with my wife so visit her

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parents. She will remain with them until November. I reside in Alton."

"Alton!" said Winnie, "that is near where my uncle resides. We are on our way to visit him — Mr. John Ellis: he has a farm a few miles from Alton.

"Mr. John Ellis! — ah! I know him well: his wife is a cousin of mine. If I mistake not, you are the Cousin Winnie I hear his children so often mention?"

"I am, sir. Are they all well?"

Quite well when I saw them a fortnight since. Allow me to introduce myself as Mr. Wenham, a friend of your uncle, and, may I hope, already a friend of this little girl here."

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Quite at her ease with her new friend, and quite pleased to meet so agreeable a travelling companion, Winnie handed him her checks, and accepted his offer to call a carriage for her; and in a few moments they were at the Cataract House. The two days passed at Niagara were days of intense enjoyment to Edith, as well as to her aunt. They visited Goat Island, pausing long upon the bridge to watch the roaring, foaming rapids, looking like thousands of rushing, prancing steeds, with snow-white, tossing manes. They descended the hill to Juna Island, lingering long to gaze at the wonderful fall of waters, too much awed to converse. The October sun shed its

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softest light over every object, as they returned to Goat Island, and stood near a little building erected for the accommodation of visitors in very hot or rainy weather, and looked down upon the Horseshoe Fall. Edith never tired of looking at the splendid green of one part of this fall, pure and clear as an emerald, and over which was constantly thrown millions of crystal drops, sparkling in the sun like opals. They then ascended the Tower, and looked down from its balcony upon the deep waters beneath. But there Edith's head was giddy, and she was in terror lest the Tower should fall, and they all be swept into the foaming abyss below.

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Mr. Wenham held her in his arms, and assured her there was no danger, pointing out the heavy stones of which the Tower was built. But she could not conquer her fear; and in a short time they descended its winding stairs, crossed the Terrapin Bridge, passed up the hill, and rested awhile in the little, rural building, once more to enjoy the magnificent prospect of Horseshoe Fall. Winnie gathered a little wildflower, and a few leaves just displaying the brilliant colors of autumn, as mementos of her visit to Goat Island. Edith found a smooth pebble to keep for Annie. At the store near the Island where curiosities are sold to visitors, Winnie purchased several articles for

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her cousins in Illinois. Edith was made happy by the gift, from Mr. Wenham, of a card-basket of birch bark, worked with porcupine quills; and a pair of slippers and a work-bag, from her aunt, beautifully wrought in colored beads. All the first day was given to Goat Island and places of interest in its vincinity; neither Winnie or Edith inclined to go over the whole ground at once. The second day, they crossed the Suspension Bridge to the British side of the falls. As Mr. Wenham accompanied them, they preferred to walk across the bridge, stopping at different points not only to look at the falls beneath, but also to look in wonder at this beautiful work of

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man, so greatly in contrast with God's more wonderful work below and around them. Mr. Wenham told them that the strong cables of twisted wire which supported this immense structure, weighed something like eight hundred tons; and the length of wire used in the twisting of the cables was over eighteen million of feet! They dined at the Clifton House; and after dinner walked to Table Rock, enjoying here an uninterrupted view of both falls, which filled them all with pleasure too deep for words. They sat upon the rock for an hour; then went to the observatory of the house, near by, where they had a still more extensive view, embracing the rapids as well as

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the falls; from thence to the Pagoda, where the views of Goat Island, Horseshoe Fall, Table Rock, the Clifton House, and the moving figures of visitors at different points were pictured, by a camera obscura, upon a table covered by a white cloth. Edith was in ecstacies, and thought this the most wonderful thing she had seen. The rainbow, with its beautiful colors, was over the falls as they returned.

With tired feet, but happy hearts, they sought their rooms at the Cataract House, to rest awhile before again visiting the Three Sisters, and looking once more from Point View, and the stone tower upon Goat Island.

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"Good-by — beautiful, splendid Niagara!" said Edith, as she got into the carriage that was to convey them to the cars. "I shall never forget you, if I live a hundred years. One of these days I will come and see you again, with Brother Frank."

At Buffalo, they stopped one day. From Buffalo, they journeyed without stopping until they reached Chicago. Here they passed one day and night, — Winnie feeling quite at home, being well acquainted with every object of interest in the city. She called upon some old friends of her uncle's, who kindly drove her and Edith, in their own carriage, though the principal streets and avenues of the city, and over the

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several bridges crossing the river. The river, which branches off in several directions, runs east, and falls into the lakes. This river, with its several branches, is lined with large warehouses, and divides the city into three parts, — the north, south, and westerly sides. These bridges must be very annoying to residents in Chicago, on account of the frequent opening of their draw-bridges for the passing through of schooners and small vessels. Edith particularly admired the stone of which so many of the finest houses are built. This stone is cream-colored, and obtained from large quarries at Joliet. It presents a pleasing appearance to the eye of a

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stranger, especially on Michigan Avenue, — contrasting, as it does, so beautifully with the rich green of the shrubbery and trees, in which many of the houses and cottages are embowered. This avenue, fronting upon the lake, is the most desirable place for residences in Chicago. Wabash Avenue, is another splendid street, containing many very fine and costly churches, — two of them, the Methodist and Presbyterian, built of the same cream-colored stone from Joliet. One very ancient looking church presents a marked contrast to the others: it is the Second Presbyterian, built of a dull white stone, spotted with black, found at one time on the prairies. I believe

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the quarry is nearly exhausted, — not sufficient stone being found at the present time to pay for the trouble of working. Quite a contrast is also presented between some of the older houses and the new ; the older ones being sunk several feet below the level of the streets — many of the houses and stores entered only by descending several steps below the sidewalk. This inequality is being done away with as fast as possible ; the city being gradually raised by filling up the streets five or six feet. This is actually necessary to admit of proper drainage, as the city is built on a flat prairie. In the afternoon they drove over to Green Park, a beautiful place close to the beach,

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along which Winnie and Edith wandered for an hour gathering pebbles, some quite variegated, and a few small shells.

At an early hour the next morning they drove to the depot, and, once more in the cars, were soon crossing the prairies — which, to Edith's eye, was the strangest sight she had yet looked upon. On, on, on! mile after mile, station after station; and still the same broad, level, green sea of verdure, stretching away on either hand to the furthest verge of the horizon. Edith's head ached as she gazed, first from one side of the cars and then from the other, at this vast expanse; and a feeling of home-sickness stole over

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her for the first time, as she began to realize the distance between her and Frank and home. Great tears were dropping fast upon her hands; tears which for hours had been gathering in their fountain, under the impressive feeling of vastness, which even older people feel in crossing our great Western prairies; but which Edith, child as she was, could not understand or analyze.

Winnie, who had also been lost in her own thoughts, at last observed Edith's unusual quietude, and, turning her tearful face to hers, asked, in an alarmed tone, "Why, Edith, darling! what is the matter? Are you sick?"

"No, auntie," she answered;

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"only I'm somehow all choked up, and tired of looking. Shan't we *never* see a hill again?"

"I hope so, my love. We are on the prairies now, — don't you remember how much you thought, last winter, you should like to visit them, when I was describing them to Annie and Frank?"

"I know I did; but then I thought they had an end, somewhere!"

"So they have. The prairie we are passing over now is small compared to some in the West; but I confess it is large enough for me. I really do not think I could be happy to live away out upon the prairie as some persons do. I love hills and mountains, and a more di-

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versified scenery ; should tire of the monotonous dead level we see all around us here. Uncle John's farm is prairie land, but what is called rolling prairie, a little different from what we are now passing over, having gentle swells, an uneven surface ; which, to me, is a great relief from the monotony of a prairie view."

"I'll tell you what I think of the prairies, auntie: I think God got tired making mountains and hills and rocks, and so rested himself by drawing his hand smooth along, ever and ever so far, — just like this," said Edith, passing her hand slowly across the seat in front of her. "I only hope we shall get to the stopping-place soon."

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Winnie smiled at her childish conceit; but only pointed out a number of log cabins they were passing, and said, "How would you like to live in a house like one of those? You see many children around them, and they appear happy and contented."

"Oh, dear me! I wouldn't live in such places for anything! How *can* any one be happy to live here! Then look at their houses! — there isn't one of them as good as our barn at Cedar Brook. I'd rather be our horse in Roxbury, than a little child here."

"You forget, Edith, that home is still home, whether in the log cabin of the hardy settlers of our western

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forests, and on the broad prairie, or in the splendid mansions of a wealthy city like Chicago, or New York, or Boston."

"Perhaps so; but I'am real glad I wasn't born here, I should feel so tired all the time."

It was late at night, and Edith was fast asleep, when they reached the station where Uncle John's carriage was in waiting to convey them to his home. Thanking Mr. Wenham for his attention during the journey, and expressing the hope of meeting him again, Winnie bade him good-evening, and, with Edith and her uncle, was soon on her way to the farm, two miles from the station. Uncle John was a fine, stalwart

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looking man, full six feet in height, his face bronzed by the sun, but, like the sun, bright and cheerful notwithstanding his long beard and piercing black eye, which made him seem to Edith very much like a picture of Giant Terrible in one of Lulu's story-books. His voice, however, was very pleasant, his manners gentle; and before they reached the farm, Edith felt acquainted with him, and gave him a minute description of all the wonderful things she had seen on her journey. No one was up in the house, excepting Mrs. Ellis, when they arrived. Her greeting was very cordial, and Edith felt at the first sight of her sweet face that she should love her dearly.

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"You must feel very tired, after your long journey," said Mrs. Ellis, as she assisted Winnie in laying aside her things, and then drew Edith to her lap. I shall not talk much with you to-night: to-morrow we will become better acquainted. I hope you both will feel perfectly at home here. I have felt very impatient for your arrival, and am delighted to see you. Let me show you now to your room, — you must need rest."

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CHAPTER III.

HOME ON THE PRAIRIE.

By daylight next morning, Edith was up, and impatient to see her cousins and examine her new home. Winnie arose too, and together they went down stairs. Early as it was, Mr. and Mrs. Ellis were up and busy: one, by the spring watering his cattle; the other, in the kitchen superintending the cooking of a substantial breakfast. The parlor was empty, so they opened the door of the dining-room, and then, what a rush! "Winnie's come! Winnie's

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come!" was screamed at the pitch of five pair of lungs, as three stout boys and two girls all strove to be the first to embrace and give her a welcome. Almost suffocated by their vigorous hugs and hearty kisses, her hair all pulled over her face, her collar rumpled, and her neck almost dislocated, Winnie begged for mercy. — "There, that will do for to-day," she said, panting for breath; "save the rest till another time, and give me a chance to introduce you to a new cousin. She will certainly think she has fallen among a parcel of bears if you are not more quiet; just spend a few of your kisses upon her.

Introduced to her new cousins,

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Edith was at home in a few minutes, and while they are plying her with questions, we will describe them to the reader. Albert, the eldest, was a tall, finely-built young man, nineteen years old—resembling his father in person and feature; Harry, a sandy-haired youth of seventeen, also tall, but very slender, though strong and healthy; Mary, a thick-set, good-natured looking girl of fourteen; Dark-eyed Sue, and flaxen-haired Willie, eight and ten years of age. Farm life evidently agreed with them all, if Edith could judge by their appetites, before which the eatables disappeared with a rapidity that astonished, as well as amused her.

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After breakfast, Sue and Edith, followed by Mary and Willie, went out of doors to see the farm. It was a pleasant place. The house, built like most of the farm-houses in that vicinity, was only a story and one half high, but covered an ample space of ground, affording a good number of convenient-sized rooms on the first floor, and four chambers with sloping roofs above. It was shaded by tall oak trees upon the east and south sides. A large orchard of thrifty peach, apple, and plum trees ran along the western side, far back beyond the corn-barn and smoke-house. In front of the house, a fine hedge of Osage orange separated the flower garden from a

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UNCLE JOHN'S FARM-HOUSE. Page 70, D.

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large field between that and the road: in the centre of the field was a small spring where the horses and cattle were watered morning and night. This field, as indeed was the case with the whole farm, was surrounded by a Virginia rail-fence, the sharp angles facing alternately the field and the road. These fences looked very strange to Edith, accustomed as she had always been to stone walls; and she asked Sue why her father did not remove them, and build walls of stone.

"I guess father would think he was set to work, to haul stones seven or eight miles, besides its costing him a penny or two! Our farm has two hundred and twenty acres in it,

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and there is not a stone on the whole place as big as a hen's egg: we have all soil here, and no rocks," said Sue, a little proud of displaying her knowledge of farm affairs to Edith. "We raise more on our farm than any other in the county of the same size."

"What is that great machine for?" said Edith, as they passed back of the barn. "What a queer looking thing!"

"That is our machine to cut wheat. Oh! I wish you had been here when the men were cutting it, 'twas such fun. Three of our horses, Sam and Lile and Stella, were all harnessed to it and drove through the fields, cutting off the heads of the wheat,

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and tossing them up on the platform in a jiffey; then it was hoisted by the elevator into the wagons, and carried over there and piled up in those great stacks you see yonder. It took father and Albert, Harry, and our three men to cut and pile it; and they worked hard, I tell you! Willie and I tramped after them all day, and had a glorious time, — didn't we, Willie?"

"That we did; and didn't we slide down the stacks, and play it was winter, and we were coasting?"

"But we" — Sue always said *we* when talking of farm matters — "haven't sifted the wheat yet: you can watch the men do that, with the machine you see over there. I like

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to watch that done, it is such fun to see the dust and chaff fly, — and Sam run his head right through a big bunch of wheat, when he goes round and round to work the machine. Willie and I always scrape up the hulled wheat that spills over when they fill the bags; and mother gives us cloth to make little sacks for it, so we can play we are wheat merchants, when the mud is too deep for us to run out of doors. Now come this way, and look at our rabbit-trap."

Edith followed Sue across several large fields, to a little patch of scrub-oaks. Here, climbing a fence, she saw a rude wooden trap, made by Willie; but, to all appearance, it had

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not been meddled with by the rabbits that year.

"I'll bet it's Evans's boys who come here and steal my game, don't you, Sue?" said Willie; "for I never find anything in my trap: but Albert always catches rabbits in his. I think it is too bad!"

"Albert understands the business better than you do, Willie: he said, yesterday, your traps wouldn't catch anything but spiders."

"Well, I guess spiders don't carry off big pieces of apple and cabbages, like what I put here yesterday. You can see for yourself they are all gone. I *know* the Evans boys stole them; they are regular thieves. If I once

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catch them at it, I'll flog them into splinters."

"Tough business you'll find it, Will, seeing they are both big enough to whip *you* into shreds. Better learn to make and set rabbit-traps as they should be, than fight with bad boys like them."

"I'll bet I wont, now, Miss Sue! My traps are well enough, if they are only let alone. I'll tell the boys they are thieves, the very next time I see them."

"Wait till you are sure, Willie," whispered Edith, as Sue laughed and ran ahead; "it is very wrong to accuse any person unjustly. You didn't intend to do that, I know. Perhaps your traps are not quite

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strong enough to hold any rabbits, even if they were caught; perhaps, too, something else may have eaten the bait."

Willie said nothing more, though he looked curiously at Edith, wondering how a little girl like her should think and talk just like his new mother. He could see, also, that she was not disposed to laugh at him, and find fault, as Sue was too apt to do; and from that moment Edith's influence for good was established over Willie.

The whole morning was passed by the children out of doors; they only entering the house in time for dinner, and then off and away over the fields and in the orchard, till tea.

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"Well, Miss Edith, how do you like living on a prairie farm?" asked Uncle John, taking Edith on his knee, and pinching her cheeks, that were already as red as peonies. "You havn't lost your color yet; so I don't think you are very homesick."

"Not in the least, uncle: I like here very much. But this doesn't seem like a real prairie, such as we passed over yesterday. You have little bits of hills here, and I don't feel as if I was living on a big platter without any rim, as I should if my home was in one log house we passed by: there wasn't a house, nor tree, nor fence near it for miles. How *can* people ever choose such places to live in!"

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"Probably because they purchase the land so cheap; and that, to those whose means are limited, is a great consideration. Generally, however, a settler selects a spot where there are clumps or groves of trees: you saw many of them jutting out into the prairie like headlands, looking in the distance like the shores of some vast lake. You also passed, before you reached here, many of what we call oak-openings, or groves of tall oaks, without underbrush or shrubs: you will see many of these while here; there are some very fine ones between here and Alton. We will ride over to Alton in a few days. You will see plenty of hills there: it is a city of hills."

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"But, uncle, are there not large ponds of water on the prairies? I thought I saw several, ever so far off in the distance."

"A stranger is very apt to think so; but there are no ponds or bodies of water on the prairies. The mist that rises in the distance on the margin of the prairie so closely resembles that which bounds our view on the water, that one is often deceived; while the groves of timber sometimes appear like islands or sharp promontories. I once witnessed what is called an optical illusion, formed by the sun shining from behind a dark cloud and throwing the light across the prairie in such a manner as to form resemblances of

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trees and stone walls, with here and there a tall tower or huge fortress. Something like, I suppose, the mirage which travellers describe, and who often think they see ships and water reflected from the burning sands of the desert."

"I should think farming must be easy work in a country like this," said Winnie, "requiring no hard labor to free it from rocks and stones, as is the case with us. Its equality of surface must render it very easy to plough and to harvest."

"It is indeed so; there being no richer land in the United States than is found on our prairies; none easier to cultivate, or that more fully repays the farmer for his labor. It

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is supposed that Illinois was once the bed of a great lake; and its rich alluvial soil has been, and is, the source of wealth to thousands of enterprising men, who have left the stern soil of New England to cultivate our rich prairie land. I remember the old place I purchased of your father, Winnie, and how large I thought the crops I raised the first year I owned it. They *were* large for New England; but I could put the whole farm in my cornfield, here, and need a guide-board to find it;" and Uncle John laughed heartily, as Edith looked sharply at him to see if he was in earnest.

"Never mind him, Edith," said

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Mrs. Ellis; "western farmers love to tell big stories, — their stories, partaking of the nature of the country and soil around them, are boundless in size, inexhaustible in fertility, and, like our vast prairies, seemingly without limit, none knowing where they end."

"Don't you believe her, sissy; she is only trying to set off my story by one still larger. Wait till you have been here a week; and if you don't say, with me, you can put all New England in a tea-cup, place it in the middle of one of our prairies, and then ride from sunrise to sunset before you get within a day's journey of it, I'll give you half my

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next year's crops, and Sam and Lile into the bargain!"

"There is one thing I enjoy here," said Mrs. Ellis; "and that is our glorious sunsets. How often I wish for the power of a Claude to transfer even a faint resemblance of them to canvas. Come with me now to the porch, and look at one. Can the far-famed Italian skies present a more beautiful picture than that?" and she pointed at the sun, just sinking behind a mass of moving clouds. The whole length of the western horizon was one gorgeous, marvellous picture of gold, piled high up with clouds of crimson fading into purple, their edges bordered with lines of snowy whitness, while from their

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summits long rays of amber light streamed upward like golden spears. Here and there a rift in the clouds seemed to open a view into the far-off glory beyond, reminding Winnie of the poet's description of a similar scene :

> "And we can almost think we gaze
> Through opening vistas into heaven."

Our little party gazed at this glorious picture till the last tint faded, and the bright stars, one by one, sat upon "their golden thrones" in the clear vault above. They then returned to the house; the children, Edith, Willie, and Sue, too tired to remain up later than eight o'clock.

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CHAPTER IV.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

With our seven-leagued boots we will step over prairies, lakes, and mountains, and take a look at Annie in her new home among the granite hills of New Hampshire. Grandpa Clifford's farm presents a striking contrast to Uncle John's. It is situated upon a high hill, half a mile from the main road leading to the village, and fenced in by substantial stone walls. Thrifty orchards of apple and pear trees cover the south-western brow of the hill; fields of

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grain and grass land stretch away down to the meadow, and beyond the road upon the opposite side; back of the house, upon another hill, is the large wood-lot from which Mr. Clifford cuts his winter fuel; beyond that is still another, covered to its summit with a heavy growth of forest trees, in which has never yet resounded the ring of the woodman's axe.

The house stands upon the highest point of land on the farm, shaded by the dense foliage of the sugar-maple — eight of these noble trees standing in a line outside the white paling in front of the house. Inside the yard, still stands the great butternut tree under which Annie's

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father used to lie when a boy and watch the stars. The house is painted white, and of two stories; a long L runs back toward the barn, containing a cool summer-kitchen, dairy, and cheese-room. The front door opens into a square entry; the parlor, upon the left as you enter; the sitting-room, upon the right. A good-sized bedroom and a large winter-kitchen opens from the sitting-room, — the kitchen used for a dining-room in summer, being cool, and commanding from its windows a fine view of the valley. In the second story the chambers correspond in size and number with the rooms below, each room presenting

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a different view of the surrounding country.

A few rods back of the dairy stands the barn, considerably larger than the house — almost always a sure sign in itself of a prosperous New England farmer. Through its open doors can be seen, on each side and over head, scaffolds piled with hay to the very roof; on its ample floor and beneath the scaffold on one side, are heaps of cornstalks for the cattle; opposite are the stalls for oxen, cows, and horses — all roomy, neat, and clean. In one of these stalls stands Old Rock, the dark bay, used now only by Grandma Clifford, in her occasional rides to the village. Grandpa still calls him "the colt,"

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having owned him ever since he was a year old; but "Old Rock" seems the most fitting appellation — but little of the life and speed of a colt remaining. However, his steady jog-trot just suits Mrs. Clifford; though his evident dislike of starting from home, and his inclination, when once started, to call at every house on the way, is sometimes a sore trial of her patience.

Come with me to the dairy. Here stands Grandma Clifford, her pleasant, motherly face looking so attractive, as she bends over the pat of butter she is showing Annie how to stamp. Her soft hair, smoothed away from her temples, is as white

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as her frilled muslin cap, and her brow almost as free from wrinkles. Her dark blue gingham dress is short enough to display her still well shaped foot, cased in its good stout leather shoe; the sleeves of her dress are turned up over the elbow and pinned to her shoulders, a white cambric neckerchief is crossed upon her bosom, and a white apron, long and full, tied round her waist. Grandma is evidently dressed for her work. Still, the dear old lady has her ornaments: her white neckerchief is not quite closed at the throat, but open sufficiently to display a string of gold beads; a circlet of gold upon the third finger

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of her left hand is still whole and bright, though worn thin by the labor of over forty years.

Beside her stands Annie — her cheeks fuller, and tinged with a deeper color, than we have yet seen them wear. We are very sure the clear, fresh mountain air agrees with her well. Like the little housekeeper she is, she follows her grandmother in her round of duties every morning, asking questions, copying receipts, skimming milk, churning, turning cheeses, and assisting in all the various work of a large dairy farm. This morning she is trying her hand at stamping the golden balls of butter her grandmother is preparing for market; promising, if

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she is successful, to monopolize that branch of business while she stays.

"Look, grandma!" she exclaims, after several trials; "does not that ball look almost as well as yours?"

"Just as well, Annie. You are a good scholar, and I guess I must ask your father to give you to me to fit for a farmer's wife, — there are plenty of good boys among the mountains here. How should you like to be mistress of one of our nice farms?"

"Not very well, grandma. I am afraid I should have to work too hard. I like to work some, and understand all kinds of cooking; but I love to read better, and I fear I should never get time to look into a book,

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if I had to work all the time, as you do."

"Books! — well, they are well enough, I s'pose, when you can't sleep, and have nothing else to do. I never had much book-learning, only what I got at our deestrict school. Since I married your grandfather — going on for forty-eight years — I havn't found much time to read, except in the Bible and almanac; but I do love to read in the good book, — and find all the wisdom I want, there. Somehow I never open it but I read something just suited to my wants; and as long as I can go to the fountain head, I let the streams go."

After dinner Annie usually took

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her book or work, crossed the orchard, and descended the hill till she reached a large field, called the 'corner lot,' being the boundary on that side of Mr. Clifford's farm. The western side of the field was screened by a belt of young forest trees, while a few rods in front of this belt stood two large oaks, beneath whose spreading branches Annie loved to sit and read or sew. The prospect here was not so extensive as from some other parts of the farm; but it was a quiet, retired spot, and Annie could watch the cows grazing upon the sides of the hill, and the cosset lambs keeping close beside them. Then she could see, between the hills, the spire of a church and three

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or four farm-houses; also getting occasional glimpses of the river. She loved, too, to listen to the rippling music of the forest trees, as the wind, like the plash of waves upon a sandy shore, or the grand music of an organ, swelled and subsided among their branches, and tossed and shook their quivering leaves in rustling harmony.

Very often her book was laid aside; and, lying full length upon the grass, she watched the changing clouds, tracing in their various outlines snowy mountains, walled cities, or giant castles guarded by huge spectral forms. At five o'clock the horn sounded for supper, and she would hasten home.

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At first, it seemed very strange to Annie to sit at the same table with Patty the hired girl, and Sam and Andrew, the men who worked upon the farm; but she soon became accustomed to this, though she secretly wished the men would follow her grandfather's example, and put on loose linen jackets or coats — her ideas of propriety never becoming reconciled to their appearing in their shirt-sleeves at the table. Her grandmother did not seem to notice this, or be troubled by their breach of etiquette; though the good lady always reached her husband's coat from its nail, and handed it to him before he came to the table. Annie had no fault to find with Patty: her

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hair was always nicely combed, her dress neat, her manners quiet. She seldom spoke except in answer to some question or remark addressed particularly to her. One of the men, Andrew, was Patty's brother, and quite as taciturn and sparing of words as his sister. But Andrew's silence was fully made up by the other man, Sam. He was tall, thin, wiry, with light hair, scarcely perceptible eyebrows or lashes, and eyes the color of skim-milk. He talked as fast as he ate and worked; it being his boast that he could cut a longer swath, or mow a larger piece of land, in a given time, than any man in the county. Andrew said that was not to be wondered at,

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seeing his arms were nearly as long as his stories, and his tongue — longer than either.

After tea, Annie usually placed her chair under the butternut tree, to enjoy the magnificent landscape spread out before her. It was one vast sea of hills as far as the eye could reach — most of those in the foreground cultivated to their very summits; others, further removed, dark with the sombre hues of forest trees — oak, walnut, maple, pine, and chestnut; and still far beyond these, upon the very verge of the horizon, the bold, sweeping outline of the green hills, rising one above another like giant waves of the ocean. Never before had Annie looked

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upon a scene so grand — never realized the meaning of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold! the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold! he

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taketh up the isles as a very little thing." And when daylight gradually faded, she watched the starry host coming out by numbers, till the whole heaven was hung with its dark canopy of blue, richly wrought in shining gold, and felt the same awe stealing over her her father had experienced, when, a boy, he lay under that same tree, and gazed with wondering eyes upon the bright orbs above him. How appropriate seemed the words in the same chapter of Isaiah, "To whom, then, will ye liken me or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth

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them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."

As the evenings grew cooler, she was forced to relinquish her seat under the great tree; but still kept her watch at the window, till the lamps were lighted and the curtains drawn. The hour of retiring at the farm was an early one for her; but she generally rose with the first ray of dawn, and for an hour or more before breakfast studied as diligently as if at home and attending school. Winnie had drawn up a plan of study for her to pursue, as Mrs. Clifford knew there was no school near enough to the farm to allow of her attending during the winter. Con-

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scientious, as Annie was, she never thought of omitting a single lesson, or deferring her studies till after breakfast; then she assisted her grandmother,— adding to her knowledge of domestic duties, and improving her health by exercise.

Annie had but one companion of her own age all that winter: this was Amy Reed, the daughter of a widow owning the farm adjoining Mr. Clifford's. Amy was just the companion Annie would have chosen — gentle, diffident, with an intuitive love of the beautiful, and a craving desire for knowledge, which, as yet, she had had but little opportunity of gratifying. Her mother's means were limited: owning only her little

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farm, that, since her husband's death, she had carried on herself, with the assistance only of her son, a young boy of sixteen. With her own hands, Mrs. Reed helped her son plant potatoes, corn, peas, beans, and cabbages; tossed and raked the hay; gathered in her winter's store of apples, and bright yellow pumpkins, besides making butter and attending to her housework.

Amy helped her mother wash, iron, bake, and sweep; milked the two cows, and fed the pig; she also did most of the sewing, and at odd moments knit her own and brother's stockings. With time thus fully employed, her moments for reading and study were of course few: it

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was only when knitting she could afford herself the luxury of reading; and many a pair of socks had grown into shape beneath her swift fingers while her eyes and thoughts rested upon the printed page. History, biography, and travel constituted her favorite reading; she cared little for works of fiction. In this respect her taste corresponded with Annie's; and when the evenings became longer, with her grandparent's consent she commenced a course of reading with Amy; devoting also an hour every Wednesday and Saturday in giving her instruction in drawing. Amy had quite a taste for drawing; could sketch flowers from nature very well. Annie proposed teaching

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her the rules of perspective, and instructing her in copying landscapes, as well as flowers.

Mrs. Reed rather demurred at Amy's wasting so much time in drawing and reading; but she loved her child too well to give expression to her thoughts.

"It's little the poor child has to amuse her, I know," she said, one day, to her son, who was sharpening a pencil he had purchased for Amy. "She has worked hard ever since your father died; and if she likes to draw, she may; I wont discourage her. It don't cost us anything for her taking lessons; so she may take all the comfort she can."

"That's right, mother," replied

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Willie, who almost idolized his gentle sister. "Amy works too hard already: let her have every advantage you can. In a few years I hope to earn enough to support you both. You shall rest then, mother; Amy shall read and study. I wish I were five years older, I could do so much!"

"Oh, how like you are to your father, Willie! He always thought of others; and I never saw the time he grudged working extra hours, if he could only make his family comfortable, or do a kind turn for a neighbor. But he's gone; and it will be years yet, Willie, before you can save enough to let your mother rest."

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"Don't fret, mother," said the noble-hearted boy: "I can earn enough, at least, to keep me out of debt and above want. Our farm is small, but I mean to cultivate every inch of it. There is gold to be dug out of it yet, and you and Amy shall have the spending of it one of these days. There is only one thing I regret, now I have become acquainted with Annie, and that is my deficient education. I know I have had as much schooling as most country boys of my age; but when I hear her and Amy talking about the books they read, and people and things I never heard of, I feel my ignorance. A farmer's life may be a healthful oc-

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cupation for the body, but it is not very expanding to the mind."

"Do not say so, William," said Annie, who at that moment entered the room with Amy. "I have heard father say that no class of men can be more intelligent than farmers, if they will only improve their leisure hours. Nearly one half the year they are free from hard labor, and that, too, in the season when their minds can act with greater vigor; not being enervated by the heat, as in summer, or feeling so great a disinclination to mental exertion. Men doing business in cities, have all their time fully occupied during the day; in the evening they are liable to constant interruptions from com-

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pany: or, as is the case with many, they pass their leisure hours at the theatre, opera, or in scenes of dissipation but little calculated to improve the mind. With you it is different: you can always, in winter, if you choose, have your evenings to yourself, and many hours in the day. These hours, if rightly improved, will give you all the knowledge necessary for your present need, or future well-being. If you —" Annie suddenly stopped, the color mounting to her temples, as she felt William might think her impertinent in speaking so plainly, and giving her opinion before it was asked. But she was quickly relieved from her embarrassment, by his saying, earnestly:

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"I know you are right, Annie. *My* father used to talk just so. There was not a more hard-working farmer in the whole town, nor one more intelligent than he. I've known him, many a time, to sit up till midnight reading; and after he had worked extra hours, too. Our minister used to say he liked to converse with father better than any other man in the parish; for father always advanced some original idea, worked out of the depths of his own mind, which set him to thinking, too; and he had really gathered subject-matter for some of his best sermons, after conversing with him. I think of this very often; and if I only knew how or where to begin to improve

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my mind rightly, I should be better contented as a farmer. I read all the books about farming I can beg, borrow, or steal; but I want to know someting else."

"Suppose you join Amy and myself in our course of reading? We will review what we have already read, if you will commence with us. I'm sure *we* shall be the gainers by the arrangement."

"Thank you, Annie; I will gladly do so. I have once or twice thought of proposing this, but have not had the courage — fearing you might think me an intruder."

"Never fear that, William! *I* have an only brother; and, when at home, neither Edith or myself ever

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fully enjoy anything in which he cannot join us. I shall be very glad of your company, and I'm sure Amy will be delighted too."

Amy did not answer, except by drawing her brother's face close to hers and kissing him fondly. Mrs. Reed wiped the tears gathering in her eyes, and said, 'You are a dear child, Miss Annie. May the God of the widow and fatherless bless you, for your kindness to me and mine. Many's the time I've fretted because I couldn't do for my children what he that's dead and gone would have done if he had lived. Ah! he was a good man, children. He didn't make much stir in the world while he lived; but now he's gone, there's

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a wide place left empty in our little home; and the world will always seem lonesome to me without him."

According to Annie's proposal, they commenced their reading in English history that evening, — agreeing to meet alternately at her grandmother's and Mrs. Reed's during the winter. William also decided to follow the same course of English literature that Winnie had marked out for Annie, — working several hours each day with the village blacksmith to procure means for purchasing books. Harper's Magazine, the Electic, and Atlantic, were sent to Annie from Frank, and thus a sufficient variety was afforded to employ all their leisure hours.

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Good seed Annie's hand was planting that long winter; and it yielded her pleasant fruit in witnessing the increased intelligence and happiness of her young friends William and Amy. Gradually, also, Mrs. Reed became more interested in reading; and in the evening when it was the children's turn to meet at Mr. Clifford's, she would draw her rocking-chair and little oval light-stand close to the cheerful wood fire, and read aloud from Harper, with no audience but kitty and Carlo, till nine o'clock, when Amy and William returned from Mr. Clifford's.

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CHAPTER V.

THE QUILTING-BEE.

It was a clear, cold morning in December. Annie was sitting by the oak secretary, busy crocheting a tidy for her grandmother; the old lady was footing a pair of woollen socks for her husband; grandpa was nodding over his paper; and pussy was purring at his feet upon the hearth-rug. Annie's thoughts were not on her work: they were far over the mountains and ocean, picturing to herself the scenes her mother described in her frequent

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letters home. A knock at the door startled her, and she looked up quickly, almost expecting to see her mother.

It was Amy Reed, who called to invite Annie to attend "a quilting-bee" with her in the afternoon. "It meets at Deacon Greenwood's," she said to Mrs. Clifford," and mother thought Annie might like to go. Would you be willing to let us drive Rock in the sleigh? Our horse slipped on the ice yesterday, and is quite lame. Willie will drive us there, and call for us in the evening; so he will be taken good care of."

"Certainly, my dear," answered Mrs. Clifford; "and I shall be glad to have Rock used: he hasn't been

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out of the barn for a week; and I'm afraid he'll be getting antic if he isn't driven more."

Annie smiled: she would as soon have thought of the great oak secretary beside her guilty of dancing a polka, as of Old Rock being antic. Not so the old lady; who, whenever she drove Rock, and had succeeded after much coaxing in prevailing upon him to start at all, was in continual fear lest he should run away. When riding, she generally worked harder than the horse — constantly pulling the reins, which she held far apart, one in each hand, shaking them, and crying, "Whoa, Rock! whoa, good fellow! be careful now, — gently, sir, gently, — whoa, now,

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ANNIE AND AMY'S SLEIGH-RIDE. Page 119, D.

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whoa!" — all which exhortations to steadiness Old Rock bore with a grave composure becoming his name, not in the slightest manner altering his pace, which never exceeded a slow, clumsy trot.

At two o'clock Old Rock stood at the door; and, wrapped in her hood, cloak, and furs, Annie took her seat in the sleigh beside Amy. The snow, though deep, was trodden hard and smooth, and Annie enjoyed the ride of some five or six miles to Mrs. Greenwood's, who resided at the extreme end of the village, in an opposite direction from Mr. Clifford's. Arrived at the deacon's, Amy and Annie were shown into a little side room to lay aside their cloaks and

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furs, and then Amy led the way into the long kitchen back of the parlor, already occupied by some fifteen or twenty ladies, busy in quilting two large patchwork spreads, stretched in frames and supported at the corners upon the backs of wooden chairs. This was a novel sight to Annie; and she watched the busy fingers of the ladies, and listened to the babel of tongues around her, with silent, but real enjoyment.

"Can't we help quilt?" she asked Amy, after a while. "I don't like to sit idle when all the rest are so busy. I feel like a drone, among so many industrious ladies. I think I could quilt, if I tried. I have been

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watching this lady next to me very close, — it seems easy work."

"It is very easy. Wait a few moments; I think Mrs. Greenwood is arranging that small quilt for us girls. Yes, it is ready now, I guess; for she is beckoning to us. Come!"

Following Amy to the further corner of the room, Annie was introduced to half a dozen girls a little older than herself, who eyed her rather closely — disposed at first to look upon her as an intruder, — her quiet manners seeming almost a reproof of their boisterous mirth, as they pushed and jostled each other in selecting their places.

"Come, girls," said a merry-look-

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ing girl with piercing black eyes, marked eyebrows, and thick, dark hair, combed straight back from her forehead and temples, and twisted in a large knot at the back of her head. "You can't all have the corner seat at this frame, any more than a kitten can put all four of her feet at once on a ball of yarn. Just come out of that snarl, will you, and distribute yourselves according to ages? Here, Deborah Cotting, take this seat next to Amy; Carrie Green, you go the other side of Miss Clifford; Jane and Ellen, you come here; Matty Davis, sit next to me. There! you are all fixed at last. Now hand me the chalk and the teacup: I will mark the first row all round;

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after that you can all go ahead on your own hook."

Annie watched Sarah Snow's nimble fingers, as she drew a chalk half round the inverted teacup, with a neatness and precision that showed she was no novice at quilting. Politely giving Annie a few instructions, Sarah took the vacant seat opposite, between Mattie Davis and Ellen Grant. "Now, girls," she said, as she threaded her needle, "make your tongues go as fast as you choose, but don't let your fingers rest a moment. If we are spry, we can finish this quilt before tea-time; and then help Auntie Greenwood set the supper-table."

Fingers and tongues did good

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work for the next four hours; and the last row of 'shells' was just completed, when word was given to lay aside work and adjourn to the parlor, while the table was laid for supper. Leaving the quilts in the frames against the wall, the older ladies gathered in the parlor; but all the young girls remained in the kitchen to arrange the table.

In a trice, three large tables were placed side by side, through the whole length of the kitchen, and neatly spread with fine, snow-white linen cloths, spun and wove by Mrs. Greenwood's own hands. Plates, knives and forks were placed all around the edge, and in a few minutes the table was groaning beneath

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the weight of cold meat, bread, cake, pies, custard, doughnuts, baked apples, jelly tarts, honey, and preserves: while at either end fragrant coffee and tea, with plenty of rich cream and loaf-sugar, tempted all lovers of those delicious drinks. The table was sufficiently large to seat every one present, gentlemen not being expected till after supper. Annie had never witnessed such a variety as was now spread out before her; and she was amused to see her plate constantly filled, by Sarah Snow, with a portion of all the good things upon the table, notwithstanding her repeated assertion that she could eat no more.

"You *must* eat," said Sarah, laugh-

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ing at Annie's look of dismay, as she handed her a plate of tarts; "folks that go to quilting-bees always eat enough to last a fortnight: so don't be frightened; we don't mince matters much here in the country, whatever your city folks do."

"Neither do I, — but I should prefer to distribute my portion through the fortnight, as you did the girls at quilting: I think I should be the gainer in the end," retorted Annie, good-humoredly, knowing Sarah meant well, notwithstanding her blunt manners.

"Just as you please," returned Sarah, with a hearty laugh; "but don't ask me to follow your example. I never get anything good to eat at

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home, and I make the most of what I can find when abroad. I'd thank you to pass me that loaf of cake. Won't you take a piece? No? Well, then, seeing you wont, I will take two slices: I can put one in my pocket, in case I should feel faint, — by-the-by, I always was great on frosted cake!" Suiting the action to the words, Sarah transferred a large slice from the frosted loaf to her pocket, and laid another beside her plate until she finished eating a piece of cranberry pie.

Annie looked at her in astonishment, but made no remark. Sarah observed the expression upon her face, and whispered to Carrie Green, but loud enough for Annie

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to hear, "Do look at that city miss! she is frightened half out of her wits at my good appetite. I really believe she thinks I shall eat her next."

"I have some fear of it, I confess," said Annie, laughing; "and, to avoid such a catastrophe, will escape while I have a chance. Pray don't come near me till your appetite is satisfied."

Sarah nodded her head and laughed, as Annie rose from the table and joined Amy and Mattie Davis.

"Many hands make light work," exclaimed Sarah, as she at last finished her supper, and pushed back her chair. "Now, girls, bestir your-

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selves, and clear off the table. It wants only a quarter to eight, and the boys will be here before we get through, if we don't fly round. Just have a little order about things, and we shall work all the faster. Let one take the plates, another the knives and forks, and another the cups and saucers — 'and so forth and so on,' as Mr. Kimball says. I'll wash the dishes, Nell will wipe them, Amy will put them away, and the rest may put the room in order. That city girl" — shaking her finger at Annie, — "may fold the tablecloths and lay them in the closet-drawer. Auntie Greenwood, you may go into the parlor, and play you are company. I know where every-

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thing belongs, and intend to be mistress here for the next half hour; so don't have the first care or thought about anything;" and the lively girl took her aunt by the arm and led her into the parlor.

The girls followed Sarah's directions, and in a short time the room was cleared, fresh logs piled in the fire-place, the chairs ranged in rows around the walls, and the floor brushed free from crumbs and thread.

In a few moments sleigh-bells were heard; and the tramping of heavy feet in the porch announced the coming of the gentlemen. "There comes Jim Roberts, — isn't he handsome?" whispered Sarah to Annie, as a smart, bold-looking young man

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entered the room, followed by some six or eight others — all evidently dressed in their best, and full of the anticipated enjoyment for the evening. "I'll introduce you to him when he comes this way. He has been a clerk in Boston for a year past, and knows everybody. Perhaps you are acquainted?"

"No, I am not. I don't go into much company at home yet. I am not old enough."

"No? — now ain't you quizzing? I thought city girls went to balls, parties, and the theatre all the time. Jim Roberts says they do."

"Then *he* was quizzing. There are a great many who never attend them. I never go to balls or theatres;

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my parents do not approve of such things; neither have I any desire to go."

"You haven't? Well, I'm misted now! Are you a Methodist?" Sarah asked, abruptly, in a tone of ill-suppressed contempt,—her idea of a city girl considerably lowered by Annie's remarks.

"No,—why do you ask?" replied Annie, surprised in her turn.

"Oh, because I've heard Methodists wouldn't dance, nor dress, nor talk like other folks. Jim says there are plenty of them in Boston, and they all wear sugar-scoops for bonnets, and groan and talk through their noses, and do nothing but pray or sing psalms the whole year round.

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I thought perhaps you might be one of them, — though you talk well enough, for all I see."

"I am sorry Mr. Roberts has no more regard for truth than to tell you such things. I know many Methodists: all I have ever seen are true ladies and gentlemen, — real good Christians," Annie answered, a little indignantly, her color rising and her black eyes flashing as she spoke. "Father says there are no more consistent, devoted Christians living than many among the Methodists; and though he is not a Methodist himself, he honors and esteems those that are."

"Heigh-day! I guess I'm in hot water now!" said Sarah, shrugging

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her shoulders. "I didn't mean to tread on your toes when I talked about balls and theatres. Folks may wear sugar-bowls on their heads, and cream-pitchers too, if they choose,—I don't care. Give me plenty to eat, and a good partner to dance with, and I'm satisfied."

Annie smiled, though she wished Sarah had a taste for higher things. She hardly knew whether she was in joke or earnest sometimes, her manner was so peculiar. The room was now well filled; an hour or more was passed in social conversation among the elder portion of the company, while games and plays occupied the attention of the younger. Sarah regretted that, on account of

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the office her uncle held in the church, they must be deprived of what, in her estimation, was the greatest pleasure in life, — dancing. "He might just as well be an out-and-out Methodist," she whispered to Annie, "as an orthodox deacon, for all the fun we can have here. Last year we had a quilting-bee at Mr. Sykes, and danced till most midnight. Jim Roberts was there too, and I danced with him three times. It's terrible stupid, if one can't dance."

Annie could not agree with her: the time was passing very pleasantly to her, though she did not join in all the games, which were sometimes too boisterous to suit her taste; so she joined Matty Davis, who was on

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her knees in front of the fire, with her two brothers, popping corn. Annie, who was quite an artist in feeling, if not in the power of expression, wished she could sketch that little group. Matty knelt in front of the fire, rapidly moving the corn-popper over a bed of burning coals. Her sweet, oval face was heightened in color by her occupation; her dark merino dress, with its edging of lace, contrasted well with her white throat and soft brown hair, which was parted in glossy waves each side of her well-shaped head, and fell in long curls over her full bust and sloping shoulders. Upon her right, knelt her brother Gregory, with another popper, and

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between them a large earthan pan heaped high with a snowy mass of the corn; at her left, stretched his full length upon the ample hearth, lay her brother Calvin, his fingers and feet keeping time with a tune he was whistling, as he rubbed the corn from the ears into a large waiter in front of him.

It was indeed a beautiful picture. In the foreground, over their kneeling forms and faces, the glowing coals and fitful blaze cast a ruddy, flickering light; the huge logs of wood, burning, sizzling, roaring, sent up the broad chimney thousands of glowing sparks; the large brass andirons reflected, as in a mirror, their earnest faces, though broadened to

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a ridiculous width. In the background moved a continual panorama of living forms, with here and there a face and head worthy the graphic pencil of a Rembrandt.

At half-past nine, apples, butternuts, walnuts, and popped corn were passed round, and sweet cider and currant wine placed upon a side table for those who wished to drink. After refreshments, a few songs were sung by the young people, with very good effect; many of their voices full and rich in tone, and all trained to perfect time. James Roberts led the singing, to the delight of Sarah, and the amusement of Annie, who observed his desire to impress all present with his superiority over the

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rest of the young men. He only disgusted Annie, who saw he was vain, ungentlemanly, bold; but Sarah mistook his affected carelessness for genteel polish, and his impertinent familiarity for superior knowledge of society and good breeding. Annie could not help contrasting him, in her mind, with William Reed; who, young as he was, and unacquainted with the world, was still a gentleman in thought and action; pure in heart and life; the mainstay of his widowed mother and gentle sister.

When the company broke up, James Roberts intercepted Annie as she was following Amy to the door, and familiarly offered her his arm;

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saying, "My pretty little miss, allow me to wait upon you home. I understand you are a granddaughter of Mr. Clifford. I know the old fellow well: he's always delighted to see me when I'm up from the city. It is quite cheering to the old fellow to see company once in a while, I assure you."

"Thank you, sir; I am provided with an escort home," Annie answered, with dignity, as she shrank from his offered arm and sprang into the sleigh beside Amy. "Do hurry, Willy," she whispered; "I hate the sight of that fellow: he is as impertinent as he is disagreeable. I hope he wont call at grandfather's while I am there."

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"I hope so, too," said Amy. "He used to try his fine airs and silly speeches with me, till I got provoked, and told him his room was better than his company. Since then he only notices me by a distant bow and frigid manner, which he no doubt considers perfectly annihilating to a simple country maiden like myself."

It was nearly eleven when Annie reached home; but she found her grandmother still up and waiting for her. The careful old lady insisted that Annie should warm her feet thoroughly before she retired to rest, and also drink a cupful of hot pennyroyal tea to prevent her taking cold by her unaccustomed exposure

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to the night air. Annie would have preferred omitting the tea, but grandma was urgent; and, to please her, she drank it.

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CHAPTER VI.

A LETTER FROM PARIS.

PARIS, DEC. 1st, 18—.

MY BELOVED CHILDREN: — My last letter, written you the day we left London, you have received by this time. My health had become so much improved before I left London, that I was able to spend nearly all the last fortnight in sight-seeing; and visited, with your father, most of the principal places in and around the city. I shall enter into no particular description of them now, as I have kept a journal, minutely de-

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scribing every thing of interest I have seen; and intend forwarding you this journal by the first of next month, when Mr. Lawton, an acquaintance of your father's, who has accompanied us thus far, will return to our own dear America, and deliver this package into Frank's hands. After Frank has read it, he will send it to Annie, and then forward it to Edith and Aunt Winnie.

I shall merely mention in this letter some of the places that interested me most. I think I enjoyed the day I passed at Stratford-on-Avon more fully than any since I left home. Aside from the associations of the place, its peaceful quiet — contrasting so greatly with the dizzy whirl

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and noise of London — was in itself a source of delight I could hardly find words to express. We crossed the calm, peaceful Avon, drove to Henley street, and stopped at the house where the immortal bard first saw the light of day. I was disappointed in the looks of the exterior of the house, which bears but little resemblance to the engravings of it we are accustomed to see. But we were told it had been altered by later owners, and separated into three tenements; though the centre division, internally, is left unaltered — no sacrilegious hand, as yet, daring to deface or "improve" the rooms rendered sacred by the presence of earth's greatest genius. We entered the

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house, and stood in the chamber where he was born, — a long, low room, with bare plastered walls, and rough, uneven oak floor — the walls, ceiling, and even the panes of glass in the window, closely covered with the names of travellers who have visited the spot. Neither your father nor myself cared to add our names to the thousands already written there, though we would gladly have brought away some memento of the place; but we could obtain none. I have, however, purchased a fine engraving of the house as it was originally, and intend to have it framed when I return home. We rode to the church where Shakspeare was buried, and visited the little cottage

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where his wife, Anne Hathaway lived, and wondered, as I suppose every visitor does, whether she was the original from which he borrowed his ideas of some of his heroines.

Next to Stratford, in interest, were my visits to Kenilworth and Warwick castles, and after that to Abbotsford. Ruined castles! How often have I read descriptions of these venerable ruins, looked upon their representation in engraving and painting, and supposed I had some correct idea of them. But, standing in their very presence, passing through their deserted rooms, looking from their ivy-mantled towers, resting in their banqueting halls, or wandering over their grounds, midst fallen stones

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covered with moss, and overgrown with rank weeds and grass, is so entirely different from all I had seen, or read, or imagined, that neither then, nor now, could I find words to convey to you the impression they made upon my mind. I believe I wept, as I sat upon a stone in one of the deserted rooms, and thought of the many years gone by since forms of stalwart men and beautiful ladies had filled that place, and its now broken walls had echoed to the music of fair maidens' voices, the heavy tramp of steel-clad knights, or the ringing laugh of innocent children.

Our last day in London was spent at the National Gallery. We had

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already visited it twice; but I wished to enjoy once more the luxury of feeding my soul, as it were, with some of those glorious conceptions of the old masters in whose presence awe, wonder, and reverence contend for the mastery. I sat for hours before some of Reuben's and Correggio's pictures, striving, if possible, to daguerreotype them in my memory.

In the excitement of visiting so many places, I was not conscious of my still weak state; but after my arrival at Paris, I realized the fatigue I had undergone, and for several days was confined to my room. Last Tuesday I rode out for the first time. Wednesday we visited the Jarden des Plantes, and spent four hours in

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looking at its plants, its spacious zoological museum, and its mineralogical and geological cabinets. How much I wished Sister Winnie and Annie were with me. I remembered little Bennie's delight in looking at Winnie's cabinet; and, as I gazed upon these immense collections, I believe I felt almost as much delighted and astonished as he did. Thursday, we drove to Champs Élysées and the Tuilerres. Yesterday we visited the Louvre; but I did not go half through the immense gallery: I felt too bewildered, dazzled, fatigued. To-day we have been there again. I intend to take it by piecemeal, going through it slowly, little by little, as we shall remain here for

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two months, perhaps three, and need not fatigue ourselves by hurrying through it in a day, as many do. I have visited many of the principal stores in London and Paris, purchasing useful and beautiful presents for each of you, which I shall bring you when I return to America.

Dear little Lulu is happy all day long, accompanying your father and myself wherever we go, and delighted with everything she sees. She has already formed an acquaintance with a sweet little girl who is boarding with her parents at the same hotel with us, — Fannie Clayton, — and when we are not sight-seeing she employs her time in keeping house with Fannie, or in embroidering a pair of

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slippers for Frank. This last employment, however, is a great secret, — I should not have mentioned it; but Frank need make no reference to it in his letters.

Yesterday, after our return from the Louvre, I missed Lulu for some time, and was upon the point of sending a servant to find her, when she rushed into the room, looking heated and flushed, and quite out of breath. As soon as she could speak, in answer to my inquiries, she said she had been standing by the window in Fannie's room looking at the carriages and people passing, when she observed a poor old man, walking slowly along, picking up bones, paper, or any other

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article he could find, and putting them in a bag he carried on his shoulder. He was stooping to pick up a shred of cloth, when a gust of wind took off his hat and carried it some distance. Carefully putting down his bag, the old man tried to run after his hat; but his steps were slow, and every time he came near it, a fresh gust would roll it beyond his reach. Lulu could not witness the poor man's ineffectual efforts to recover his hat with indifference. She threw down a little poodle of Fannie's she was holding in her arms, ran down three flights of stairs into the street, followed the hat as it rolled along the gutter, almost under the feet of the horses, till she caught

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it, wiped off the dust with her dress, and handed it to the old man. He was profuse in his thanks, though Lulu could not understand what he said. He, however, by placing his hand on his breast, and gesticulating as none but a Frenchman can, gave her to understand his gratitude, and also that he gathered bones, paper, etc. for his living. Lulu, without hesitation, took him by the hand and led him into the kitchen of the hotel, asking the cook to supply him with some broken meat and bread, while she ran up stairs to beg permission to give him something herself. I did not object, though I told her it was not always well to give money unless

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we knew something of the person we wished to benefit.

She, however, felt sure he was good; and pleaded that perhaps she might be doing good, and planting a little seed of happiness in the poor old man's heart, if she gave him a little assistance. "It seems so hard," she said, "for an old man like him to work all day picking up bones in the street and sell them, for a living. If you will give me a franc for him, I will go without the box of colors you promised me, that, you said, would cost a five-franc piece."

I yielded to her wish, and she ran off with her gift. I watched the man as he left the hotel, and felt

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glad I had gratified her; for he was, indeed, very old and infirm. To-day he has been here again, to bring Lulu a little crucifix of wood, that he told her, by signs, was carved by his little grandson, only ten years old. It is very neatly made.

Now, my dear ones, I must finish this letter to go by the next mail, though I have not told you one half I intended when I commenced writing. Frank's journal has been read with deep interest by his father and myself. Inside the package I shall send by Mr. Lawton, containing my journal, he will also find a letter from his father answering some of his questions, and giving him advice upon some difficult points respecting

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his conduct at school. I have also written separately to Annie and Edith, and shall hope to hear from them before long.

Let me hope, my dearly loved children, that you will seek every opportunity to improve yourselves and do good to others while I am away. Let me repeat what I have so often said, when with you, never to forget that you are workers in God's vineyard, sowing with your own hands seeds of either good or ill, for time and eternity. Remember then, that there are no trifling actions in this mysterious life of ours; little things, like little seeds, long buried though they may be in the dark bosom of the earth, are yet working out results which we

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cannot foresee — results that may influence our whole lives — may stamp our characters for all eternity. Be careful, then, my children, and follow not only what may seem right in your own eyes, but test every act, examine every motive, understand well the ground of your own hearts, and strive to cultivate only such seed as God may bless. I do not expect any of you will be called to perform great deeds, to encounter unusual trials: the even course of your lives in the pleasant homes you are placed in, for the present, will not, probably, present any startling incident, any surprising temptation; but you can all exert an influence upon those around you, all cast the weight

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of that influence into the right scale. You will often find it harder to learn thoroughly a difficult lesson, give up a trifling gratification for the convenience of another, curb a hasty spirit, or bear unkindness, neglect, or misunderstanding from those whose good opinion you value, than it is to do, or bear, some great thing which will require unusual effort or heroism. But watchfulness and prayer, and, above all, faith in Christ, will give you all the strength you need. Go to him, then, in simple trust, in childlike love; and may he whose eye notices the feeblest efforts to do good, bless and reward your labors. May he grant, also, that we may meet again, rich in the

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experience of his love and goodness, once more in our own dear home at Cedar Brook, to bow around our family altar, unitedly to thank him for his sparing mercy. Such is the prayer, daily, of

Your loving

MOTHER.

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CHAPTER VII.

A DAY AT THE BLUFFS.

FRANK'S life during the winter was quiet and uneventful. His progress at school was rapid, and, with Elliot, he stood high in all his classes, — a favorite with most of the boys, and highly commended by his teacher. Mr. Scarrett, with his sterling worth, his plain way of speaking, and his habit of divesting things of false colors, was an able assistant in teaching Frank to use his own powers of observation and reflection, and pre-

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venting his being misled by specious words or appearances.

Mr. Scarrett had a wonderful memory; and, though quiet, and at times morose in manner, had still a fund of anecdote and useful information at his command when he chose to be communicative. He was very fond of Frank, and always with him laid aside his reserve and conversed freely. Though from education and habit rather too much inclined to look at the failings of others, he could still fully appreciate and encourage true merit wherever he found it. He observed Frank's effort to do right; sympathized in his struggles to overcome his quick temper; helped him analyze his

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motives; and stimulated his desire to do all things as in the sight of God, and not from love of the praise of man.

With the advice of Mr. Scarrett, and the consent of his father, Frank attended a course of lectures at the Lowell Institute, and also took lessons upon the organ — having quite a talent for music, especially sacred, which he wished to cultivate. The only piece of extravagance Mr. Scarrett had ever indulged in, was the purchase of a large parlor-organ, when he was quite a young man, and the taking a quarter's lessons of an eminent organist. Through all his misfortunes in business he had managed to retain his instrument,

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and most of his leisure hours were passed in perfecting his knowledge of sacred music. His offer to instruct Frank was eagerly accepted; and, stimulated by a desire to do credit to his teacher and surprise his parents, Frank practised two hours every evening when not attending the lectures. With time so fully employed, he found little opportunity for foolish sports or unprofitable companions; though he took sufficient exercise by skating, coasting, or walking, to benefit his health. Elliot came in almost every evening, and Mr. Wentworth often called with his wife, — forming a pleasant circle in the old gentleman's snug parlor.

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Mr. Wentworth's pledge remained unbroken; though there were hours when his old appetite clamored for gratification — moments when his struggles against it were agonizing. But Mr. Wentworth had learned to pray for himself: he no longer left that duty to his gentle wife. Alone in his closet, with tears and supplications, the strong man knelt and wrestled with the temptation, beseeching God, for Christ's sake, not to suffer the adversary of souls to conquer his resolution or cause him to break his vows. God heard those prayers; and Mr. Wentworth went forth from his closet clothed in the whole armor of God. At such times there was something in his manner

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so calm, so heavenly, so expressive of support and help from above, that his wife and Elliot gazed upon him with almost tearful awe. Mr. Wentworth was a man of few words; and Mr. Scarrett's rough integrity, and stern decision of character, had a real charm for him; and he often sought his society, as a kind of moral tonic to his own weaker nature.

Another long step across the prairies, and we are at Uncle John's.

It is the last week in April, — warm, beautiful, summer-like as with us in June; the trees in full leaf, the grass green, the birds singing, the prairie covered with flowers. Edith never tired of wandering over the

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broad fields — always accompanied by Sue and Willie — or of gathering flowers; filling her apron, and often the skirt of her dress, with every variety she could find. These were all carried to her Aunt Winnie, who threatened to purchase a whole crate of vases to fill with the flowers Edith brought; as vases, pitchers, tumblers, glass dishes, and saucers were all pressed into service to hold her floral treasures.

The brilliant bluebell, with its pink buds and bright blue flowers, blossoming the last of March and first of April; the Dutchman's breeches, spring beauty, shooting-star, the American cowslip, with the green leaves and tender shoots of

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several flowering shrubs, and sometimes handsful of fresh grass, were arranged every morning by Winnie and placed upon the tables, mantle-shelf, bookcase, and bureaus in every room, making the whole house look fresh and cheerful by their presence.

Mrs. Ellis told her that many of our garden flowers grew wild there; such as the larkspur, spiderwort, and coreopsis. The passion flower also grew wild all through the woods, and the scarlet trumpet vine in June and July. A plant called amorpha canescens, or the leadplant, is found on prairies and in crevices of rocks; supposed to indicate the presence of lead ore. There is also a singular tree found in the woods called the

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bladdernut, from which Edith gathered many of the seed-vessels in January. These seed-vessels resemble those of the balloon vine though larger and fuller; are hollow, and present a very pretty appearance hanging from the extreme end of slender branches, dancing with every breath of wind, and making a rustling, rattling noise as they sweep against each other.

Edith had been to Alton several times with her aunt and cousins, very glad once more to see some hills, — though she thought those upon which Alton is built very singular in form, and rather unsafe, in many places, for dwellings. The deep chasms between the hills

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caused her a little fear at first, and she kept tight hold of her uncle as he drove near some of these precipices. He assured her there was no danger, though he acknowledged they did look, as Edith said, rather pokerish, and told her it was a common saying there, that these chasms are so deep, that if all the hills were dug down, there would not be earth enough to fill the spaces between.

Edith thought Alton must have been the very last place made — all the earth left over in the creation of the rest of the world being tossed there in lumps, and in the course of time built upon as a city. She wondered at its steep, narrow streets, its irregularity of buildings, especially

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in the business portion of the city, where many modern-looking buildings of brick or stone, four or five stories in height, are flanked on either side by old wooden tenements of only one story, unpainted and out of repair; looking like the dilapidated remains of a past century. She was much amused by a sign her uncle pointed out in one of the streets over a blacksmith's shop. It was oblong in form, having a horseshoe painted on it, and underneath, this inscription:

"Gentleman, as you pass by,
Upon this shoe just cast your eye;
If too narrow, we'll make it wider,
To suit the horse and please the rider!"

"That man must have the soul of

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a poet, and a true sense of the fitness of things," said Winnie; "notwithstanding his grimmy face and leather apron. Who shall say that he has not mistaken his calling, and ought to be cultivating the gentle muse instead of shoeing horses? Why not have a poetical blacksmith, as well as a learned one."

Albert had promised the children that he would take them, his mother, and Winnie to the bluffs, and pass the day there and upon the shore of the Mississippi, on Wednesday, if the day proved pleasant. All Tuesday Mrs. Ellis, Winnie, and Sally the girl were busy in boiling ham and tongue, baking cake, and frying nutcakes, as they intended to go

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early in the morning, and make a a long day of it, eating their dinner and supper on the shore, or in the woods.

Cloudless and beautiful the next morning dawned over the prairie; and with the first rays of the sun every one was astir and ready for breakfast. The baskets of provision were then packed. Two bottles of coffee prepared with cream and sugar, a tin kettle to heat the coffee in, tin cups, plates, napkins, a tablecloth, knives and forks, filled one basket; cold meat, pickles, cake, bread and butter, and pies filled another.

A large wagon, without seats, but filled with straw, and drawn by Sam and Lile, was appropriated to the

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children, and driven by Harry. Another wagon, smaller, and requiring but one horse, was reserved for Mrs. Ellis, Winnie, and Lizzie Mayne, a daughter of one of their neighbors. This wagon had no seats, but crickets for the ladies, covered with shawls, and an inverted pail for Albert, answered the purpose very well.

Uncle John and Sally stood at the broad gate opening from the field to the road, and waved their handkerchiefs at the children, who shouted and screamed good-by, perfectly wild with delight at the thought of their visit to the bluffs. Fortunately the roads, which in that vicinity are generally knee-deep in either mud

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or dust, were in good condition, and the jolting of the cart without springs, over the roads, only served to add to the children's merriment as they jostled against the sides of the wagon and each other, pretending they were fearful of being upset.

The road to the bluffs, after turning from the main road and descending a steep hill, is wild and romantic in the extreme. They took what is called the Hophollow, or Fairmount road, winding through deep glens and beneath great, interlacing trees, along a path in the forest seemingly worn by a brook, and as irregular in its course as the trail of a serpent. Sometimes the wagons seemed in danger of "dumping"

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their loads, as the horses struggled up a hill — short, but steep as a pair of stairs; again, they were threatened with a plunge-bath in crossing a narrow stream, the wheels on one side resting on a ledge of earth two feet higher than the other, causing the children to cling to the sides of the wagon with all their strength; again, a fallen tree, lying directly across the road, "jounced" the breath almost out of them, as Harry drove the horses full tilt over it, telling the children to "hold on, shut your eyes, and harden your hearts." Once, Edith, in trying to reach the branch of a creeper hanging from a tree under which they were passing, lost her balance by a sudden plunge of

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the horses in a deep hollow, and was landed, without much ceremony, in a clump of bushes by the side of the road. Even Mary, whom Harry always called the "butter-firkin," from her short, stout figure, could hardly keep in the cart at times, but was rolled and shook about till she was tired.

At last they emerged from the woods into an open space leading directly to the river. How beautiful to Winnie and Edith seemed that first view of the Mississippi! Opposite, on the Missouri side, low wooded banks lined the shore for several miles; far down the river, a circular island, covered with trees to its very edge, looked like a great emerald upon

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the placid bosom of "father of waters;" above, they could see a small steamer winding its slow course toward them — now close to the shore, and again nearer the middle of the river, to avoid the sandbars so numerous in that vicinity. Scrambling from the wagon, the children were soon on the shore, running backward and forward, apparently without any aim but to test the swiftness of their feet and the strength of their lungs.

Their mother, Winnie, and Lizzie Mayne followed, more composedly, but with equal pleasure. The bluffs, which in some places rise perpendicularly from the shore to over three hundred feet, are in this part about

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two hundred and three feet in height, their tops covered with rich soil and large trees, — the face of the bluffs presenting a castellated appearance, looking like ancient towers of stone and strongholds of former owners of the soil.

These bluffs are composed mostly of fossiliferous remains, — shells, fishes, and reptiles. Large rocks, and smaller pieces of stone broken from the face of the bluffs, lie scattered all along the shore for miles; affording lovers of geology a fine opportunity of gathering specimens.

Winnie and Edith were especially delighted at this chance of collecting with their own hands so many specimens to add to their cabinet at

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Cedar Brook. Albert had provided his mother, Winnie, and Lizzie with heavy hammers for breaking the rocks, while the children were supplied with small baskets and bags to hold the fresh shells, pieces of flint, or any other curious thing they might find. They wandered slowly along the shore for nearly three miles, filling their bags and baskets, occasionally resting to watch the little steamer, which was puffing and blowing, as the captain sought to start her from a sandbar upon which she stuck fast. It was hard work, and a work of time, too; for most of the passengers got out of patience, and borrowed the captain's small boat and rowed across the river to

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the Illinois shore, walking up and down till the steamer was loosed from the bar and once more in clear water. A passenger on board a Mississippi steamboat needs to lay in a large stock of patience, and should have plenty of time at his command, as well as good nature; for numerous snags and sandbars will try the one, and be likely to exhaust the other. He should not attempt to travel that way if he is in a hurry; for though he may start on his journey fair enough, he can never tell when, or where, that journey may end.

"Oh, come here, auntie!" cried Edith, who for some time had been kneeling on the sand picking up shells as fast as her fingers could reach

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those around her, "I have found some thing now!—look! isn't this the end of a horn— a stone horn? I just dug it out of this heap. Do look at it."

Winnie examined it, and, sure enough, Edith had found part of a petrified horn, resembling a buffalo's, about three inches in length. "This is very like the one I have at home; you remember it—the one Mr. Leeds gave me: he picked it up on the shore near Dubuque. I shall value this even more highly than I have that, —associating this, as I always shall, with our pleasant day here," said Winnie, as she placed it carefully in her carpet-bag.

"I guess I can beat that," said Mary, joining them; "please examine

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this piece of stone. I found it close to the base of the cliffs, up there under those bushes. It was lying upon another large piece of rock, as full of fossils as this. See how thickly crowded it is with tiny shells, closer than plums in a wedding cake. There are thousands, I should think, — some no larger than a pin's head. In this corner is something that looks like the spine of a fish."

"It is the vertebrae of a tiny fish. How perfect it is! Look at it through this little magnifying glass of mine, and you can count all the bones; and here, close beside it, is a petrified worm, — how wonderful! Have either of you observed that none of the fresh shells we have picked up

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on the shore to-day, are of the same species as any we have found in the petrifactions? I have not seen one."

"Neither have I," replied Mary. "I can count nine different kinds on this one piece of stone, and not one of them are like any we have seen to-day."

"I have got something, too, for Cousin Winnie," said Sue, who now came along, her apron filled with a heavy load of variegated flints. "Father calls these Mississippi agates. Ain't they handsome? Wont they do for your cabinet?"

"Yes, indeed, Sue. I should like some of them very much. Sit down here by me, and I will select a few; I do not care for all."

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Mrs. Ellis and Albert now joined them. "Can it be possible that it is so late, — half-past one o'clock?" said Mrs. Ellis, looking at her watch. "How quickly the morning has passed! I guess we are all tired and hungry enough to relish our dinner. While you and the girls are selecting your flints, Albert and I will prepare our dinner under that tree at the foot of the bluffs. Harry is already kindling a fire on the shore to heat our coffee. When all is ready, we will call you. Willie, you can fill a pitcher with water from the river as you come along."

"Toot! toot! toot!" sounded loud in the ears of Winnie and the children, as Harry caught up a tin

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tunnel from one of the baskets and blew a shrill summons to dinner. "Toot! too! to!" echoed, in softened tones, from the face of the bluff, surprising Edith, who had never listened to an echo, and who turned her head in every direction to ascertain from whence the sound came.

A large flat rock, covered with a clean, white tablecloth, served for a table, upon which Mrs. Ellis had spread a tempting array of food for our hungry party. Ceremony was dispensed with, each helping him or herself as they felt inclined. How delicious the fragrant aroma of the coffee! How inviting the cold meat, the fresh, white bread and butter; not to mention the frosted cake, pies, and

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apples! Everything relished better than usual; seemed to have assumed a fresher, more savory taste, under the influence of that clear air and the unaccustomed exercise they had taken.

After dinner, the dishes were washed, and, with the remaining provision, repacked in the baskets, to serve for supper. Albert and Harry went up the river some two miles to fish, while their mother, Winnie, and Lizzie Mayne rested for an hour, after their fatigue. Making pillows of their shawls, they slept awhile, and then talked and sang till the boys returned. The children could not remain quiet so long, but amused themselves in skip-

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ping stones, and building ovens in the sand to roast some of the muscles they found in the edge of the water.

In a little more than an hour the boys were seen coming along, each with quite a string of fish, — Harry's hands full of delicate flowers, and an empty bird's-nest for Edith he had picked up in the woods back of where they had fished.

Albert proposed they should all walk a short distance further down the river, to a point where the bluffs jutted out from the rest, and sloped gradually towards the shore. Here they climbed to a small cave, and obtained several specimens resembling a coarse limestone, which forms a thick crust on some parts of the

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cave. Descending again to the shore, they followed Albert through a deep ravine, by a steep path winding up a high hill to the top of the bluffs. Here they gained a level space of some fifteen or twenty feet square, from which they could look directly down the bluffs upon the shore beneath. It was a fearful height, and none of them dared to stand upon the dizzy verge of the rock, but sat down, holding on to each other as they looked over the edge. Albert and Harry threw stones over the bluffs, trying to reach the river; but succeeded only once or twice — the stones generally falling far inside the shore. Even at this height, Winnie found a fine fossil bivalve

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embedded in a loose rock, and which she endeavored to loosen from the stone as a memento of her visit to the spot, but, unfortunately, broke it in the attempt.

"I wish I had brought my hammer up the hill with me," said Albert; "then I could have knocked out that shell for you without breaking it; but just below where we turned into the ravine at the foot of the hill, I saw a portion of a petrified snake, and laid my hammer against it so I could find and break it out for you on my return. I saw, also, a flint, as large and round as a cannon-ball, that I broke open, and think worth preserving. It looks precisely as if a large nut was embedded in

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the centre; and, I should think, might be polished so as to look very handsome. I have seen several that came from Clifton, a few miles from here, and they are all very singular."

"If you are sufficiently rested," said Mrs. Ellis, "I think we had better return to the shore, and eat our supper, as it is nearly six o'clock, and we have a two-hours' ride before us."

After supper, Albert took the heaviest basket and a carpet-bag of "rocks;" Harry and Willie followed with the others; and Mrs. Ellis, Winnie, and the children brought up the rear. With tired feet they at last reached the wagons, which the boys had driven some distance upon the

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shore to shorten their walk, and were soon winding through Hopholl-low—a happy, but not quite so noisy a party as in the morning.

The western sky was clear and cloudless, as they gave a parting glance at the mighty river and bade it a reluctant good-by. The moon was high in the heavens, the evening star shone brightly, as they reached their prairie home, looking so lovely in that mellow light, surrounded by trees, and half draperied with ivy and grapevines planted by Mrs. Ellis herself.

Sleep was sweet that night; and Edith, for once, could look back upon a day of unalloyed pleasure.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BLIND LUCY.

"How would you like to take a long ride with me to-day, Edith?" said Uncle John. "I have business to transact at a village some twenty miles from here; and there is a spare seat in my buggy, if you would like to accompany me."

"I should be delighted to go, if Aunt Winnie is willing."

"Certainly, my love," replied Winnie. "You know we shall return home next week, and you had best

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improve every opportunity you have of seeing the country."

Lile was soon at the door, and Edith sprang into the carriage by her uncle. How lovely the prairie looked that clear May morning — enameled, as it was, with thousands of brilliant flowers, giving it the appearance of an immense garden, without fence or limit,—north, east, south, and west one unbroken, grand display of verdure and beauty, almost entrancing Edith by its loveliness.

"I begin to think, uncle, that a prairie is almost as pleasant as the Roxbury Highlands, or Boston Common," said Edith, who, with a true spirit of Yankee boasting and self-satisfaction, would never acknowl-

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edge there was a place in the whole universe more beautiful than her own home. "If you only had a few hills and some nice brick houses here, wouldn't it be fine?"

"Then this would not be a prairie, Edith: hills and brick houses would be out of place here. No, — leave the prairie alone in all its still, solemn granduer and floral beauty, — I would not have it changed. Though, like you, born in New England, and still holding in pleasant remembrance its green hills and bold, magnificent scenery, I must still acknowledge that there is something in the vast, unbroken level of a prairie, that harmonizes more fully with my nature, — something that

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brings me nearer to God, and keeps me, as it were, close to him. I should not, however, like to live entirely alone, away from all society, as many do. I enjoy quiet, retirement; but not solitude. I remember once riding over one of our larger prairies, alone, on horseback, for two days, passing but three or four houses in all that time. I stopped at one of these log cabins over night; and the owner told me his nearest neighbor lived eight miles distant. I think if I had lived there, I should have felt as lonely as did Alexander Selkerk on his solitary island, and exclaimed, with him:

'O, solitude! where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this horrible place!'

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"We are going to visit one of these lonely settlers to-day; though not quite so retired as the one I just spoke of. Mr. Johnson is a rough man, uneducated, not very prepossessing in appearance, but honest, good-natured, and industrious. He has been somewhat unfortunate of late, from the failure of his crops and sickness in his family. He has only one child, a little girl, who was deprived of her sight three years ago, and is now, I hear, quite out of health. I occasionally ride over to see them, and carry a few luxuries they are not able always to obtain at the village nearest them. I went to Alton last night, and purchased a few nice groceries, oranges, and other

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articles I thought might be acceptable. I shall stop at their house on my way to the village some five miles beyond, and will leave you with them, if you would like to stop."

"Thank you; perhaps I may. But how old is the little girl; and how did she become blind?"

"I should think she was near your age — ten or eleven years; perhaps not so old. She lost her sight by the explosion of some powder a little cousin thoughtlessly threw in the fire, before which she was stooping at the time. She received the whole blast in her face — destroying her eyesight, and otherwise greatly disfiguring her."

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"I should think it would have killed her."

"It was singular it did not: but she suffered dreadfully, and for days was not expected to live. She at last recovered her health, but only to be blind for life."

"How sad!" said Edith, shutting her eyes, and trying to imagine how she should feel if she were blind. She could not keep her eyes long closed, however; there was too much to see and enjoy.

"O, uncle!" she exclaimed, on opening her eyes, "do look at that funny wagon, with its enormous high top, covered with a white cloth! What is it — a great butcher's cart? And see what long, comical-looking

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ears those two black horses have! They look too funny for anything!"

"That is an emigrant wagon: you will see many such in this part of the country. That man standing by the horse is an emigrant; and the wagon probably contains his family and all his worldly goods. They have, very likely, been travelling weeks in that fashion; camping at night near some clumps or grove of trees, sometimes on the open prairie, building their fire of dry sticks, and cooking their simple meals over the coals. Those are not horses, — at least the two black ones, — they are mules — much stronger, hardier, and less expensive to keep than horses. The single horse in front

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of the mules, you perceive, is larger, taller than they, but is not, probably, as strong. I will drive that way, so you can look inside the wagon."

Mr. Ellis rode up to the wagon, and lifted Edith out of the buggy, while he questioned the man, who was just unharnessing the horse and mules.

"I don't exactly like to stop here, in the hot sun," said the man, "without even a bush to shade us; but we've a hundred miles more to go, and the horse and mules must rest. We've travelled all the way from Pennsylvania, taking it fair and easy. Last fall I bought a tract of land, bordering on a forest, fifty miles beyond the prairie here; cleared two

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acres, and built a comfortable log cabin. I was there nearly all winter, working hard to make things look kind o' home-like. This spring I went back to Pennsylvania to get my family. They are all there, well and hearty," nodding towards the wagon; "and we're calculating to be all settled in our new home before another week. Wouldn't little miss like to look into a house on wheels?" he asked, as he raised Edith in his strong arms and held her up to the front of the wagon.

Edith looked in, and saw his wife, a comely-looking matron, sitting in one corner, leaning her head against a box, sound asleep, with a young babe in her arms. Astride a large

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bundle, was a chubby boy of three years, eating a luncheon of cold meat and bread, that he had just reached from a basket hung upon the side of the wagon. Two girls and a larger boy were letting themselves down from the back of the wagon—the boy holding a large iron kettle in one hand, the girls with their aprons full of potatoes, onions, and bread.

"Come, mother! it's time for dinner," said the man, as he put Edith gently down, and held out his hands for the baby, who was now wide awake. "Give me the boy while you get out."

Edith watched the man as he cleared a circle in the grass, with a hand-scythe he took from the wagon,

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and then kindled a fire on the vacant space, with some dry wood and twigs he had gathered in some of the groves they had passed on their way. Driving two strong stakes in the ground, he laid upon their notched ends a stout cross-stick, and then filled the kettle with water—leaving his wife to prepare the potatoes and onions for boiling, while he watered the horse and mules. Soon the flames were crackling, and the smoke ascending and circling in white wreaths in the clear air, giving even the broad prairie a home-like aspect. The well-filled kettle was hung on the cross-bar over the fire—the flame winding and shooting long, fiery tongues round its black sides, in

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every direction; the hungry party, seated on the grass around, patiently awaiting their savory meal, which already sent forth its aroma from the boiling kettle.

They were a happy-looking family, hardy and robust; seeming well calculated to contend with the hardship and privation of a frontier life. Edith would have been contented to remain an hour or more watching the little group, — having already cultivated an acquaintance with the baby, who was crowing, laughing, and holding out his little hands, evidently wide awake for a frolic, — but her uncle said they must be on their way, as they had yet some distance to go.

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"Here you are, at the end of your ride," said Mr. Ellis, reining in his horse beside a rude cabin, built upon the edge of a small grove, that Edith had been watching for some time, and which, she said, looked like a green island on an ocean of green. The house was of the rudest kind,—built of logs, with a low door in the centre, and upon each side one small window, containing but four panes of glass. The chimney was roughly made of stones and clay, built outside of the house at one end. A few feet from the opposite end, was a well, with its tall pole and sweeping arm, from which swung a wooden bucket. Upon the left of the house stood an open shed,

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used for sheltering the stock of the little farm.

Blackened stumps of trees stood around the house; between them, a narrow road led to the front door. A careworn-looking woman answered Mr. Ellis's knock, and greeted him with a smile of pleasure.

The house contained but two rooms, and a small garret that could be reached only by a ladder. The room Mr. Ellis and Edith entered was sitting-room, parlor, kitchen and bedroom, all in one; the little room on the left, served the purpose of a storeroom and cellar; while the garret, a mere closet, in which a grown person could hardly stand upright, was the only spare room.

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Edith glanced around the room in which she now stood. The furniture was scant and homely — four wooden chairs, a pine table, a chest of drawers, cooking-stove, corner cupboard, a double bed with a trundle-bed underneath — the beds separated from the rest of the room by a curtain of chintz, hung from the ceiling.

Lucy, the blind girl, was sitting near the door, knitting a coarse pair of stockings. Edith started as the child turned her head toward the sound of their footsteps. She was pale and thin, as if recently recovered from sickness; her eyes were closed, her face badly scarred, her skin discolored with the powder that had

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left ineffaceable marks upon her face and neck. But there was a sweet expression about her mouth, and over her poor scarred face, which, after the first surprise, irresistibly drew Edith toward her.

"Isn't there a little girl here?" she asked, in soft tones, as she held out her hand to Mr. Ellis, whose voice she recognized. "I heard another step, lighter than yours. I'm blind, you know, little girl; but though I can't see, I can hear very quick. My name is Lucy, — will you shake hands with me?"

"Yes, Lucy," cried Edith, taking the little hand in both of hers; "and kiss you, too, if I may. Oh, how sorry I am for you. Don't you feel

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very unhappy; and are you in pain all the time?"

"Not now; I'm only weak because I've had the fever and ague so hard this year; but I'm much better now. Sit down here by me, and let me tell you all about it. When I was first blind, oh! I did suffer dreadfully, and I used to wish to die, I felt so lonely; so tired of having it dark — always dark! — but I'm used to it now;" and she drew a gentle sigh.

Poor Edith's sympathizing heart would not suffer her to speak without tears; so she remained silent, striving to control her feelings as she passed her hand caressingly over Lucy's soft hair, which was combed smoothly off her temples, and looped

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in long braids at the back of her head.

"You had better lay aside your hat and cape, Edith; as I will leave you here with Mrs. Johnson and Lucy while I ride over to the village. I shall be back by four o'clock," said Mr. Ellis, as he placed a basket upon the table, with the request that Mrs. Johnson would accept the contents — at the same time handing Lucy an orange.

"I think your uncle is the very best man in the whole world," said Lucy, as he went out and her mother told her what the basket contained. "He always thinks of just what we need the most. Father can't very often get these things

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in the village; and besides, he is not able to now. He lost all his crops last year by the army-worm: and had the chills and fever so bad, he couldn't do much for months. Mother has been sick, too; and some of that nice tea your uncle has brought will do her good. Wont you take one of the oranges?"

"Oh, no, indeed! I can have as many as I like, any time. But do tell me, Lucy, what makes you so happy? I'm sure I should want to die, if I was blind."

"I don't know, — perhaps it's because father and mother, and everybody, are so kind. Mother has taught me to knit and weave little baskets; so I keep busy all day.

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When she can spare time, she reads to me; and every night father takes me in his lap and tells me stories. Then Miss Ellery, our nearest neighbor, four miles from here; comes to see me every Sunday afternoon, and reads out of the Bible, and teaches me to sing hymns; and brings me flowers — tells me their names and how they look. Then sometimes I tie a string round Carlo's neck" — patting the head of a handsome spaniel lying at her feet, — "when I'm tired of sitting still, and he leads me all round the wood back of the house, or out on the prairie; always walking *so* carefully, as if he knew I was blind, and felt he must take good care of me. Oh, I have ever so much

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to do and think about, all the time! Often when I'm thinking of all that mother reads, and of what father and Miss Ellery tell me, I seem to see everything in my mind so plain I almost forget I'm blind. Then, you know, I could see once; and I go over and over again in my mind how things used to look, and it helps amuse me and keep me from forgetting. How do you look?" she asked, suddenly, passing her hand over Edith's hair, and then gently drawing her fingers over her face. "What is the color of your eyes and hair? I can feel that your hair is soft and curly; you have large eyes, a straight nose, and a laughing mouth, I guess, — and, oh, what deep

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dimples!—I can put my finger in them: *don't* you love fun? Now please stand up, and let me measure which is the tallest. Why! we are just the same height, ain't we? only you are stouter than I. How old are you?"

"I am nearly eleven."

"Then you are a year older than I am: I was ten last month. Father says I grow like a weed."

Mrs. Johnson, who had for some time been busy in preparing dinner, now placed the chairs at the table, and invited Edith to dine with them. While she and Lucy were taking their seats, Mrs. Johnson went to the door and called her husband, who was chopping wood back of the

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house. He came in directly, and Edith almost shrank from him, as he patted her on the head, and in a rough voice, said, "Hollo, miss! who are you; and where did you come from? You wasn't raised in this neighborhood, I take it?"

"This is Edith Clifford, father," said Lucy, in her sweet tones, "our good Mr. Ellis's niece. He brought her with him to-day, and left her to keep me company while he went to the village on business."

"Oh, that's it, is it, darling? Well, then, I'm very glad to see the little woman. Now give me a kiss, Loo, to whet my appetite for supper," and the rough man kissed his blind child with a tenderness that showed his

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roughness was only in manner, not in feeling. Mr. Johnson's face was thin and sallow, not having recovered from his last "fit of the shakes," as he told Edith; his hair was very thick, and not very neatly kept; his heavy brows almost met over his nose; his coarse, black beard hung nearly to his waist. He was dressed in an old, faded, blue frock; pantaloons of dark brown, patched with black cloth, and heavy cowhide boots drawn over the bottoms of his pantaloons. Take him altogether, he was the roughest specimen of a Western farmer Edith had yet seen. But before dinner was over she felt herself quite at ease with him, and interested in his account of the life of toil and

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hardship he had led since he lived upon the prairie.

After dinner he invited her to go with him and Lucy to see a fine colt he was raising, and also a pair of young steers. Carlo followed close to Lucy, although not needed now as a guide, her hand being held fast by Edith. Stopping at the open shed, Mr. Johnson took a few ears of corn from the bin, and then passed round the grove to a large lot, of several acres, — the only portion of his farm that was fenced. At the further corner of the lot, a pair of milk-white steers were feeding — so near in size and shape, that Edith thought they must be twins. They were not, however; one of them having been raised

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on a neighboring farm, the other purchased by Mr. Johnson of a drover the week previous. Near them was a slender, beautifully formed, dark-red colt, with black tail and mane, and a white star upon his forehead. At the sound of Mr. Johnson's voice he came trotting toward him, and ate the corn from his hand. He looked a little shy, at first, at Edith, who held out to him an ear of corn she had taken from Mr. Johnson; but he soon ventured to nibble at it, and finally allowed her to pat his head, and feed him in her turn. He suffered Lucy to put her arm round his neck, would rub his nose playfully on her shoulder, and follow her in whichever direction she went.

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The steers were not quite so gentle; but would toss their heads and throw up their heels at every attempt of Lucy or Edith to approach them, though they would stand perfectly still for Mr. Johnson to stroke or feed.

On their way back to the house, Edith gathered a bouquet of flowers for Lucy, who told her all their names by their scent or touch, and afterwards arranged them in a tumbler and an earthen mug, as prettily, and with as much taste, as if she possessed the faculty of sight.

Four o'clock came only too soon for Edith, who already loved the gentle Lucy as truly as if their acquaintance had been for years instead of hours. She felt sad at the

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thought that she should never see her sweet face again, — for sweet and peaceful it indeed was in feature and expression, though sadly marred by the traces of the dreadful accident that had so completely darkened her young life.

At parting, Edith slipped a plain gold ring from her own finger, and placed it upon Lucy's. "Keep that for my sake, dear Lucy," she whispered, as she threw her arms round her, and tenderly kissed both of her poor sightless eyes. "It will make you think of me when I am hundreds of miles away. Perhaps we shall meet again; but if we do not, I shall never forget you, and shall love you dearly, always."

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"And I shall love you too," said the blind girl, her lips trembling, her voice sad, as she returned Edith's embrace. "Perhaps," she added, in a whisper, that her mother might not hear, "we may meet again; but I don't think we shall, till we get *there*"—pointing upward. "But then that will be so much better you know; for I shall *see* you then, and know exactly how you look. We will be friends always, there, wont we?"

Another embrace was all Edith's answer; and she sprang into the carriage to hide her tears. Blind Lucy stood at the door of her humble home, and listened to the sound of the carriage wheels until it died away in the distance. She then

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entered the house, called her faithful Carlo to her, and hiding her face upon his neck, burst into tears. Darker than ever the world seemed to the poor child now Edith was gone, and more keenly she felt her loss of sight; for since her blindness, she had never had a companion of her own age. Her father, mother, Miss Ellery, and occasionally a chance call from a traveller, was all the society the lonely child ever knew; all kind and sympathizing, it is true, but still not able to enter into all her childish thoughts and feelings, as Edith had done that day. Need we wonder that her little heart that night longed more than ever for the sight of that beautiful home

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where there shall be "no more night," and where the inhabitants thereof shall no more say, I am sick! "but where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away."

As Lile carried them swiftly toward home, a heavy sigh escaped Edith's lips as she thought how dreadful it was for Lucy to be shut out from the sight of this beautiful world, with its trees and flowers and changing sky; but, above all, from the faces of father, mother, and friends. "Why has God been so good to me, and made my lot in life so much pleas-

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anter than Lucy's? — why am not I blind and poor and sick, like her?" were questions that arose in Edith's mind as she rode homeward, — questions that led her to realize as she never had done before, her cause for gratitude for her own numberless blessings, and also her entire dependence on God for their continuance.

"Oh! I will love God for his goodness, and try to serve him better," she said to herself, as she undressed for the night. I will begin this very night, and pray Christ to help me. Perhaps he'll pardon my sins, and teach me how to be steady and thoughtful, and like a Christian. Bennie wanted me to meet him in heaven; and this afternoon Lucy said

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the same thing: they both seemed to take it as a matter of course. How little they knew what a foolish, wicked heart I have! But"— and Edith's face grew brighter at the thought — "Frank said the first step in a Christian life was prayer; without it, we could do nothing. I'll take that first step now; and perhaps Jesus will help me take another; and one of these days I *may* be a Christian."

Edith knelt beside the bed, and from the depths of her childish heart sent up a fervent prayer to God for pardon — beseeching him to make her a true disciple of Jesus. She prayed, too, for Lucy, Frank, Annie, and her parents. Somehow, prayer, that night, was not 'up-hill work,' as it

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had always been before to her. She seemed to have so much to ask of God, so many dear ones to remember before him, that she had no lack of petitions to offer, no loss for words in which to present them.

Winnie came up stairs just as Edith got into bed; and, surprised to find her awake, asked her if she felt more tired than usual from her long ride that day.

"No, auntie, darling; I'm not tired in the least. I feel wide awake, and just like singing: my heart is as light as a feather. Perhaps it's because I am going home next week, and shall so soon see dear father and mother and Franky. Isn't God good to make mother well, and come back to

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us once more? I really think, auntie, I love God some. Do you think he loves me?"

"I am sure of it, Edie. All his goodness to you, all his watchcare over you, tells you daily of that love. And then how little he asks in return for all that boundless love! — 'Son, daughter, give me thy heart.' Will you not do it, Edie?"

"I've been trying to to-night, dear auntie," answered Edith, nestling her head in Winnie's bosom, and kissing her a good-night.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOME AGAIN.

At eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, Edith and Winnie gave a parting glance at Uncle John's pleasant home on the prairies. Edith hardly knew whether to laugh or cry — her regret at parting with her uncle and cousins counterbalanced by the joyful thought of soon meeting her parents, sisters, and Frank. She waved her handkerchief from the window of the car as long as she could distinguish the little group watching their departure from the depot, and

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then gave herself up to the enjoyment of the scenery around her.

We shall not describe their homeward journey, as they made no stop on their way, preferring to travel day and night, in their eagerness to meet their loved ones at Cedar Brook.

The conductor had just assisted Edith off the steps of the car at the Worcester Depot, Boston, when she suddenly found herself in Frank's arms, and heard his familiar tone welcoming her home.

"O, Franky, darling! how glad I am to see you! and how tall you have grown!—see, I'm only up to your shoulder!" exclaimed Edith, as he led her into the ladies' room while Peter looked after the trunks.

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"Come here and sit by me, and tell me how mother looks, — is she quite well? How is father and Lulu? and has Annie got home? Dear me! I'm so impatient I to want know everything in a minute!"

Frank endeavored to answer some of her numerous questions; but she constantly interrupted her by asking others, hardly giving him a chance to finish a sentence. Passing her fingers through his curls, and looking at him with beaming eyes, she exclaimed, suddenly:

"Why, Frank! how handsome you are! — you are a splendid looking fellow!" in a tone of such unaffected admiration that every one in the room smiled; and poor Frank, with

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the color mounting to his temples, was glad to take his hat and see if the carriage was ready.

"Hush, Edith!" said Winnie, smiling too; "you must learn to repress your feelings, and not say all you think. It is very embarrassing to others, sometimes, to hear such personal remarks."

"I couldn't help it, auntie. Frank *is* handsome, and I am not afraid to say so, if he is my brother," said Edith, in a tone of defiance, as she looked upon the smiling faces around her.

"That's right, my little miss," said a pleasant-looking gentleman standing near her; "never be ashamed to show your love for your

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brother. I think he must love his sister, as well as she does him. I have a little boy and girl at home, who are never happy if they are separated. I hope they will always feel so. There is nothing more beautiful to me in this world, than a sister's love for a noble-hearted brother."

Clasped in her mother's arms, and holding Lulu's hand fast in hers, Edith was too happy to talk; but her eyes glistened, her cheeks burned with excitement, as she listened to the conversation between her parents and Winnie, or to Annie's description of her sojourn among the mountains.

Mrs. Clifford was greatly improved in health, free from her distressing

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cough, and had entirely regained her strength. Mr. Clifford had grown very stout, and looked ten years younger than when he left home. Annie's face was fuller, her cheeks tinged with a faint color, her form and carriage queenly. Hers was a face and form to attract the admiration of all who saw her, though her manners were too reserved to allow of any expression of that admiration in her presence. Frank had changed in appearance the most of all. He had taken that sudden start in growth common to boys of his age, and was now a head taller than Annie. He was erect, well proportioned, with full chest and broad shoulders. His hair, like Edith's, was of a rich,

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dark chesnut, thick, and curling over his broad, white forehead. His eyes were darker than hers, but as animated and changing in expression. There was also a dignity of manner, and an air of quiet self-possession, about him, that impressed one with the idea of his being older than he was in reality, — in short, he well merited Edith's expression of being a splendid-looking fellow.

"Didn't I tell him," said Bridget, one day, to Edith, "that he'd be a President of all these American States, some day? And sure, miss, where will they find in this whole country a handsomer one than he — heaven bless his illigant face! I'll wager this tin ladle, that he'll stand

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six feet in the President's chair, without shoes and stockings, yet! You needn't laugh, Miss Edith, — you'll live to see it, too. What a pity it is you're only his sister! — barring that, you might be his wife, and presidentess of all this big counthry, and Roxbury at the end of that!"

Mr. Scarrett has also altered much during the winter. He has become more sociable, more gentle; has lost his grim, bitter look, and is more ready with words of encouragement, and finds less fault with others than he used to. Edith playfully asserts all this change is owing to her superior wisdom, in first discovering he had a corner in his heart for little children.

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"What a treasure I have proved to be to you!" she said, one day. "If I had not actually plagued you into taking notice of me, you would never have had your real amiability and good temper fully developed; but might have lived and died a crusty old man, wondering to the very last what the Lord ever made children for."

"So you really think I am changed, Edith? — really improved!"

"Indeed I do, Uncle Rob; and you may thank that romping little youngster, Edith Clifford, for it, too," said Edith, playfully shaking her finger at Mr. Scarrett, and laughing heartily.

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"Who told you I said that?" said the old man, quickly.

"Oh, a bird of the air! And the same little bird told me Mr. Scarrett would 'like to have the training of that little romp one week! *He'd* put her in a straight jacket, — tie her hand and foot, if he could not restrain her in any other way.' Aren't you sorry you never tried it, uncle?"

"Tut! tut! child," said the old man, pinching her cheeks; "I guess Bridget told you that. I did say so, when you first came to Cedar Brook, and watched you one day climbing a tree like a squirrel, and tilting upon one of the highest branches. I certainly thought you would break your neck; and did say something,

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I believe, about a straight jacket. However, let that go, seeing we are such good friends now."

"Yes, uncle, — let bygones be bygones; and now let me read you a letter from Uncle John."

Rejoiced that our little friends are once more united in their happy home at Cedar Brook, we will leave them for the present, and finish their history in the next, and last, volume of this series.

END OF VOL. IV.

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